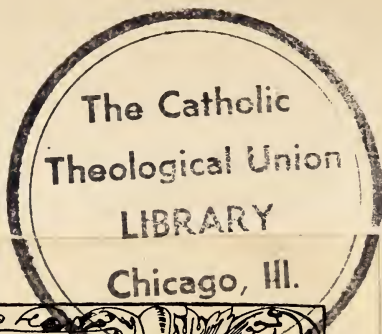


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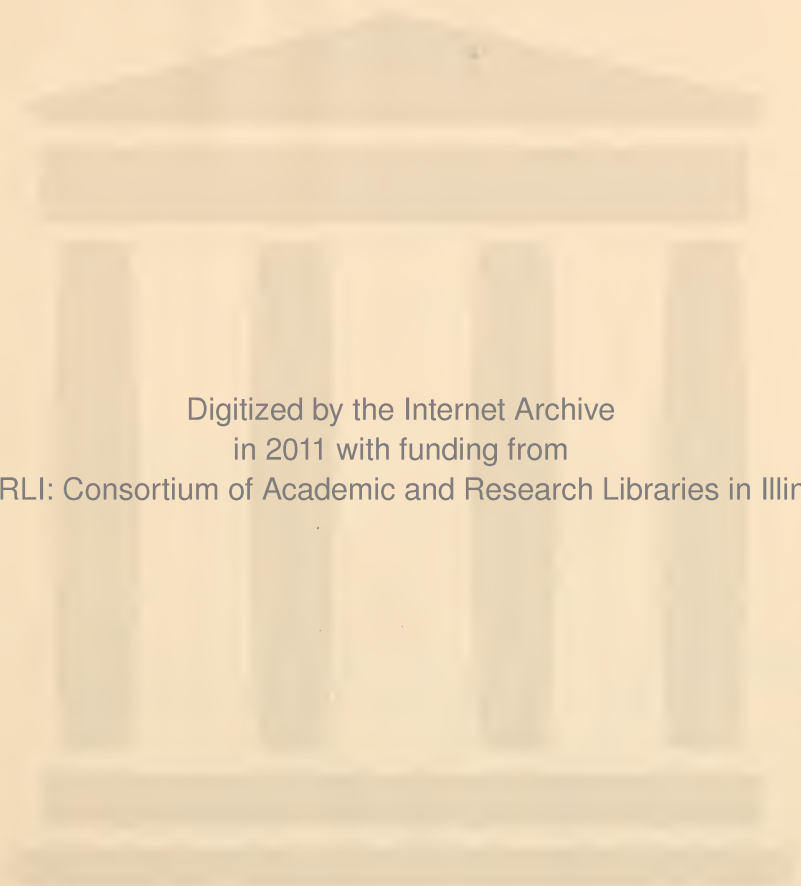


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RETREAT ADDRESSES

TO

WOMEN

Protestant

BY THE LATE

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Editorial Note.

THE present volume contains a selection from the many Retreats given to Religious Communities, and their Associates by Mr. Davidson. It has been compiled from his own notes, which were for the most part full and distinct.

The last Retreat (at Ditchingham, 1898) is the only exception to this. It was supplied from the shorthand notes of two of the Retreatants, and is believed to be very accurate.

It may be noticed that the subjects of two sets of these addresses ('The Vine and the Branches,' and the Prayer in St. John xvii.), are similar to two in the Companion Volume of 'Addresses to Clergy.' But it need hardly be said that the treatment in each case is quite different, and suited to the needs of those especially addressed.

The Editor wishes to express her great obligation to the Rev. Herbert F. Hunt, Vicar of Cookham Dean, Berks, who has revised and corrected the proof-sheets both of this and of the 'Notes of Addresses to the Clergy.' Without his assistance the publication of these volumes would have been well-nigh impossible.

J. D. D.

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Notes of Addresses delivered at Wantage Community Retreat, 1887.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

ONCE more God calls us into Retreat, and we place ourselves again under the special guidance of His Spirit, to '*abide under the shadow of the Almighty*' for a season.

This very call suggests, dear Sisters, some thought at the outset by way of preparation. What does this call mean? What is its bearing on our past and on our future? How shall we respond to it? Let us set ourselves to answer these questions. Let us consider that times of Retreat are times of Divine grace and Divine communications.

1. There is a repose from outward distractions: '*Come ye apart and rest awhile.*'

2. There is spiritual awakening and conviction as, *e.g.*, to Elijah in the cave: '*What doest thou here, Elijah?*'

3. Special Divine instruction: '*When they were alone He expounded all things to His disciples.*'

Old and familiar truths receive new significance: some higher revelation. He gives a nearer vision of Himself; a deeper insight into His loving purposes; a call to closer and more unreserved obedience. As on the Mount of Transfiguration the Voice was heard: '*This is My Beloved*

Son: hear Him. May the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, be with us to teach us, and to bring all things to our remembrance.

There is another consideration. This Retreat falls at a special epoch in your community life—the opening of a new chapter in its history. One* who, as the Mother, has long guided you, has laid down the cares of office. God has called another† to succeed. There are greater difficulties in her position from the new and larger demands on her by the extension of the Community. Pray, therefore, in this Retreat for her as well as for yourselves.

I propose to take as the subject of meditation Our Union with our Lord, the Centre and the Foundation of all true Religious Life, as set forth in the Allegory of The Vine and Its Branches (St. John xv.).

Address I.

THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IN ORIGINATING THIS UNION.

‘My Father is the Husbandman.’

In contemplating this union, begin, as our blessed Lord’s words suggest, by considering the relation in which, by virtue of this union, we stand to the Father. Further on, another distinct relationship—that to the Holy Ghost—will come into view. Between the two, as the centre and substance of the union, is the Divine Manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ, constituting the perfect union of the Divine and human and the true point of contact between

* Mother Harriet, for so long the mother at Wantage.

† Mother Lucy who still (*Deo gratia*) is at the head of the Community, 1902.

man and God: '*At that day*' (when the Holy Ghost is come) '*ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.*' Let us for the present survey, in reference to this union, our relation to the Father.

Our Lord's words describe and particularise this relation: '*My Father is the Husbandman.*' Several thoughts are suggested by this illustration—this imagery of a Vine and the Husbandman.

1. Observe that our Lord represents Himself here in His Manhood. For the Father stands apart as in a higher region of Being—the Husbandman, who plants and tends and watches over the Vine.

2. The Father, as the Husbandman, plants the Vine.

Our Lord's Humanity planted in the earth—His mystical Body, the Church, set up in the world—how full is Scripture of this imagery!—He planted His vineyard '*with the choicest Vine.*' And then (as shadowing out the universality of the Church and its growth and extension among men): '*When it had taken root it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it; and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar-trees. She stretched out her branches unto the sea; and her boughs unto the river.*' Our Lord, gathering up the imagery, points to Himself as fulfilling its significance: '*I am the true Vine*'—the ideal Vine.

3. The Father is the Originator of this union between the Vine and the branches. As He plants and rears the Vine, and the Vine puts forth Its branches, and the branches inhere in the Vine, He is the origin of their living union. '*My Father is the Husbandman*':—the Church collectively the branches; each individual soul a branch, springing up in its union with the Vine, out of the love and care of the great Husbandman of souls,

the everlasting Father, or, in reference to the relationship: ‘*This is My beloved Son*’; ‘*Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*’

Let us fix our thoughts on one point—the love and care of the Father as the Husbandman of souls.

(a) We are called to realise our place in His love—that we are very members incorporate, etc. Let us ask ourselves how far we have been faithful or unfaithful to this position. We are not as others who know not. Our Offices, our Communion, our principles of life, testify to it. He hath ‘*called us with an holy calling.*’ How is it within?

(b) Our call to union with the Beloved. All Christians are called to union with Christ in His sufferings and His glory. But there is a special union in the Religious Life for those who are brides of the Heavenly Bridegroom. Let us realise this in the crucifixion of self and the conformity of will. How much, both of sacrifice and of joy, is involved in those words, ‘*My Beloved is Mine, and I am His*’!

(c) Our consolation in the Father’s love: ‘*The Father Himself loveth you.*’ In chastening, for ‘*whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth*’; without, trouble; within, desolation. In the various incidents of our special lot He is guiding and leading us; in the perplexities and difficulties of our position: ‘*I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, fear thou not.*’ May He, the loving Husbandman Who loves us in His Son Jesus Christ, never cease to tend and care for the vineyard of each one of our souls until He has made us living branches of the true Vine, marked with the Divine mark of true union, in sacrifice, in self-surrender, in perfect

Our Response to the Call—Unfruitfulness 5

conformity of will, bearing fruit more and more; made altogether one with Him: *'Such as are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God.'*

Address II.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE CALL—UNFRUITFULNESS.

LET us consider in the two following meditations our response to the call and its great determining characteristics—fruit or no fruit. Let us take at present the failure of fruit: *'Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit.'* This is a solemn, deep, and searching consideration. By the issue or fruit of union we are brought into special relation with the Father, by the union itself to the Son, by the method of the union to the Holy Ghost. So, further on: *'Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.'* *'The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit,'* expecting and requiring it.

Consider the Father's care: *'What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?'* So speaks the heavenly Husbandman. In His dealings there is judgment as well as love. The unfruitful branches are removed; love and care not responded to are withdrawn; the unfruitful branch is taken away. Souls that are irresponsive to the calls of grace, that fail to correspond with grace given, that make no return for the love and care of the Father, are cast off: *'Cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground?'*

How awful is this thought! Let us dwell on it awhile,

dear Sisters, for it speaks with a warning voice to each one of us. There is warning to each Branch of the Church. How often is it fulfilled in history! So it is especially declared in the Apocalypse. *'I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent,'* saith He, *'Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.'*

There is also a warning to each community in a Church. It is an anxious question for members of a Community such as this, especially for all who bear Office in it. Is it fruitful? Does it grow? does its fruit increase to meet the needs of the time? does it rise to the work God has given it to do? *'Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.'* Is the tone of the Religious Life deepening in it? is the life of Christ manifested in it as the issue of union with Jesus? Are the lives of its separate members purified and consecrated more and more? Bearing *'the marks of the Lord Jesus'*; as the Bride of the Lamb *'arrayed in fair linen, clean and white.'* *'The Bride hath made herself ready.'*

There is also a warning to each member in a Community, to each individual soul. Let us search ourselves in secret and meditate on this question. Each one has received some special portion of the Father's love and care, and a special part of the Father's work to do. How have we each fulfilled our own part in the work—*'the work which Thou gavest Me to do'?* How have we responded to our special gifts and opportunities, greater or less? We are not all alike. Some have more talents, some fewer. Gifts of grace, or position, or powers of influence—have we used them for God, or for ourselves, or not used them at all? *'Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.'* Is the secret personal union of each

Our Response to the Call—Fruitfulness 7

soul with Jesus really deepening, putting forth the graces of the Christ-life, or are there marks of decay or fruitlessness? Among the signs of unfruitfulness are indifference, self-love, discontent—indifference leading to stagnation, self-love to effortlessness, discontent to a rebellion of our will against the will of God. ‘*Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart.*’ ‘*Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy holy Spirit from me.*’

Address III.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE CALL—FRUITFULNESS.

LET us pass on to the other great response, the other great issue of the union—fruitfulness: ‘*Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*’ What a striking and significant utterance! We might have expected the reverse to ‘casting away’—viz., retaining and treasuring. So it is, only in a new and startling sense. By pruning, by cutting away, by cleansing, the Husbandman ‘*purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*’ In other words, the fruitful members of Christ’s Body are in the Father’s wisdom subjected to a searching and purifying discipline, and this discipline is necessary to the increase of their fruitfulness.

I. What a subject, dear Sisters, for our meditation is this process of the heavenly Husbandman! Let us dwell on it carefully; try to realise the truth in its widest sphere, in the history of the Church: ‘The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.’ The sufferings of the faithful,

tend not only to their own purification, but become the source of the real power and triumph of the Faith: '*Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.*'

II. The history of Religious Communities testifies to the same truth. Ease and prosperity and worldly honours have been their ruin. Their struggles, their hardships, their reverses have often attested the favour of God and issued in spiritual power. Well is it for a Community to have its cleansing visitations, its pruning discipline, the lopping off of its rank growth and its needless accessories. The image of the Divine character is thus stamped upon it—a truer union with its suffering Lord.

III. Consider also our own personal experience—the discipline of the spiritual character in the individual. Absence of spiritual trial is a real cause for anxiety. Is there no sign in any part of our complex life, in any sphere of our work, of the pruning knife of the great Husbandman? Should we even wish to get rid of a spiritual trial? That trial is a sign of fruit: '*Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*'

IV. Or, again, the discipline of *special* trials. Increase of fruitfulness is the real purpose. How hard it is to realise this! We speak of them as hindrances, and say, 'If only we could be rid of them!' Not so; they are the very reverse—means of greater usefulness, of more abundant fruit to God. *E.g.*, the trial of weak health or low spirits may yield the fruit of patience; the hardship of an uncongenial lot on earth may yield the fruit of conformity—difficulties and obstacles in the way of our plans to trustfulness and perhaps to power over a lingering temptation. Surely by all these the life is more likened to the Divine Life, the work to the Divine work; the Divine

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union is made real, the Divine glory is secured. ‘*Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ’s sufferings.*’ ‘*He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*’ What are the signs of increasing fruitfulness? These must be sought for in a growing likeness to the Divine Image; in the use we are making of trials; in the Divine union testified by the tokens of the Divine character; in greater obedience to the Divine calls, and more simple unselfishness in their fulfilment. So, beloved, may ‘*the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, . . . be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love.*’ ‘*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*’

Address IV.

OUR RELATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

WE have considered the relation in which we stand to the Father in virtue of the Divine union, and the issues of this relationship—its fruitfulness or unfruitfulness. Another aspect of our subject now presents itself—viz., our relation to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself,—the relation of intimate and personal union with Him. The relation to the Father is expressed by the words: ‘*I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman*’; the relation to the Son by those other and parallel words: ‘*I am the Vine: ye are the branches.*’

We pass from the Vine and the Husbandman on the one side to the Vine and the branches on the other. And

the transition is itself significant, for, as here imaged forth, our Lord stands between the Father and us; the true Vine reaching back in Its origin into the eternity of the Father's Godhead, and then forward, by Its branches, into the region of time and humanity. Like the Patriarch's ladder planted on the earth, but reaching up to heaven, linking together earth and heaven, man and God.

We have here in parable the image shadowed out of the mystery of the Incarnation and the true Manhood of our Lord: '*The only-begotten Son, Which is in the Bosom of the Father*'; planted as the choice and the true Vine in the soil of earth, taking to Himself our earthly nature, and by the union making it Divine. The true point of contact between the Godhead and the Manhood; God and yet Incarnate, '*the one Mediator between God and man.*' '*I am the Vine*' issuing forth from the Hands of the heavenly Husbandman: '*ye are the branches*' issuing forth from Me, and by virtue of My oneness with the Father ye also are united with Him. This union is often spoken of by our Lord: '*At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.*'

Another point in reference to this relation is the completeness of the union. It is a twofold or double union, a mutual fellowship: '*Abide in Me and I in you.*' Not only do we live in Christ, but Christ lives in us. '*Both thoughts are essential to the completeness of the union*' (Bishop Westcott). Yet again, as our Lord's words imply, this living and mutual fellowship is to be maintained by our own care and effort: '*Abide in Me, and I in you.*' No forced union, but one by love on both sides, to be maintained by mutual love drawing each to the other.

Consider the points or stages of this union :

1. The Husbandman's care and discipline.
2. The life-giving virtue of the Vine.
3. Our own voluntary correspondence with that care and that life: '*If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed.*'

Such is the outline of our great subject. Let us pause at this point and concentrate our thoughts upon one particular. Let this be our question: How are we realising and making sure this deep and mystical union?

I. As a community. Are the energies and virtues of the Divine Life made manifest in our body? One token of the union with Christ is the manifold activity of the Divine Life: '*He that abideth in Me bringeth forth much fruit.*' Another is the patience and long suffering of the Divine Mind: '*Hold thee still in the Lord and abide patiently upon Him.*' A third is the tone and stamp of the Divine Character, its sanctity, its heavenly temper: '*Jesus Christ evidently set forth, crucified among you.*'

II. In our personal individual life are we making sure of this union with the Bridegroom of our souls? There may be the dying-out of the inward life, even though the outward life be vigorous—some unsubdued tendency of heart or mind or will choking and withering up the life of Christ within us. 'What is it in me—that sin, that fault, that self-love?'—'*If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.*' The growing power of self-mastery is an evidence of the vitality of the Divine Life in us. Power over impulse, feeling, words; the supernatural triumphing over the natural: '*Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.*'

Such is the growing preciousness of our personal fellowship and communion with the Lord, in private devotions,

in ejaculatory prayer, in the abiding and increasing consciousness of the Divine Presence in our daily life: '*I am alway by Thee, for Thou hast holden Me by my right hand.*'

Address V.

OUR UNION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

LET us dwell a little more in detail on this great subject of our union with our Lord Jesus Christ, and trace out some of its practical developments in our present meditation. If there is this vital, this doubly cemented union, 'we dwelling in Christ, and Christ in us,' it must manifest itself: '*The life of Jesus*' must be '*manifested in our mortal flesh.*' Indeed, as our Blessed Lord assures us in this very passage, its manifestation should be great and abundant: '*He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*'

And further, notice the stress laid by our Lord on His being in us,—His Life in us. It is not only that we are in Him, but that He is in us: '*Abide in Me, and I in you*'; '*He that abideth in Me, and I in him.*'

Consider the reality of the Divine and supernatural life in us. We generally dwell less on this side of the Divine union than on the other. St. Paul and St. John insist strongly on it: '*Christ liveth in me.*' '*God dwelleth in us.*' '*We know that we dwell in Him, and He in us.*'

Then, if this be so, what developments or manifestations of this Christ-life are there in us? We have already dwelt generally on this; let us go now more into detail, and

make it a special subject of self-inquiry. As our first reflection, ponder on the slowness and feebleness of these manifestations in ourselves. The life of Christ makes little way; its great characteristics are but feebly developed in us. Thou sayest, O Lord, that there shall be '*much fruit*' in this supernatural life. Why is there so little in me? Is it from withering cares? '*Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me.*' Or is it that we are unconscious of our deficiencies, are self-ignorant or self-satisfied? '*Who can tell how oft he offendeth?*' '*I know nothing by (against) myself: yet am I not hereby justified.*'

Let us resolve to grapple courageously with some real hindrance, within or without, and to seek more self-knowledge. Let there be no despondency, no sitting down in acquiescence with a long-standing sin; no trifling with an enfeebling habit: '*Nothing shall be impossible to you.*' The supernatural life can triumph over all: '*I can do all things through Christ, Which strengtheneth me.*'

Set the Image of the Christ-life before us more continually in every-day work. Let the life of Christ be manifested practically; the Pattern of that Life and the Power of that Life be brought to bear upon each duty, each incident, each trial of our daily life, upon each little thing, each commonplace task, or petty vexation: it is '*The little foxes that spoil the vines.*' There should be no single point of our life or work in which the power of the life of Christ should not make itself felt. The example of that Life should act upon us as we meet each call or trial of the day hour by hour. How it might suggest to us. Silence under provocation; acceptance of humiliation to our sensitiveness or love of notice; restraint of natural impulses; recollectedness of the Divine Presence—espe-

cially in difficulties; and, before action, to refer all to God: '*I am alway by Thee.*' God's will, not our own, is to be sought in each case: '*Not My will, but Thine.*' So shall we bring the life of Christ to bear on our life, that the life of Jesus may be '*made manifest in our mortal flesh.*'

What urgent necessity is there for meditation on the Divine Life! If the Life is to be present with us in all our work it must be in all our thoughts. The Image fades, because it is not habitually contemplated. There should then be great care to preserve a time for meditation in our active life—regular, stated meditation, however brief. Its great subject should be the Divine Character, and some point in that Character should be introduced into all our meditations. Irregular meditation breaks up into fragments the Divine Image, and it is very hard to reproduce it. But by regular and constant contemplation of that Life we are drawn away from self and from self-contemplation. We are lifted up into a higher atmosphere, raised above circumstances, above vexings and trials, above brooding and morbid fancies, to forget ourselves while our thoughts are more absorbed in Him. How this one thing will transform our whole daily life!—'*Changed into the same Image,*' as we behold in the mirror '*the glory of the Lord.*'

Union with Christ is thus deepened. As we copy and respond to that Life, we are drawn more and more into it, and it becomes more and more a part of ourselves. The supernatural life in us becomes a realised experience, and it is no more I that live, '*But Christ that liveth in me.*'

Address VI.

THE SACRAMENTAL ASPECT OF THE UNION.

WE are led on naturally to one other aspect of this union with Christ our Lord—viz., its Sacramental Aspect. If this union is a practical influence in the life, if it is fed by devout meditation, then, also, it is centred, so to speak, in the Divine Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Let us now address ourselves to this important and central aspect of the Divine union. It comes before us in this passage in many interesting points of view; new lights fall upon the mystery as the passage before us unfolds itself. Think of the significance of the occasion of the Parable of the Vine. It is a portion of the Eucharistic discourse. The teaching is not to be dissociated from the occasion; the Divine union is connected by the very occasion with the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist: ‘*Abide in Me, and I in you.*’

There is a communication of the supernatural life. This is one special purpose of the Eucharistic mystery: ‘*Because I live ye shall live also.*’ How can Christ live in us? How can His life be communicated to us? It is always a mystery, yet some indications, some clues are vouchsafed. We are taught the direction in which to look. The Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, give the Presence of His Divine Humanity. As we partake of this, His Divine Life is imparted to us in a mystery; it is a spiritual inheriting of the life of the second Adam as truly as our natural life is drawn from the first Adam: ‘*The*

first man is of the earth earthy; the Second Man is the Lord from heaven.'

There are gradations in the Divine Life, and tokens of its existence and power: It subdues impulses of the natural life; it reproduces features of the Christ-life; it transforms the old nature into the new; it issues in the perfect likeness, the Resurrection Nature of the Son of Man: '*Changed into the same Image from glory to glory*'; '*When I awake up after Thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it.*'

Thus the great purpose of the Eucharistic mystery—the communication of the supernatural life—is fulfilled in us. How the Parable of the Vine illustrates and enforces all this teaching! The sap flowing into the branches; the branches springing out of the Vine and made very parts of It; the Tree of Life, the True Vine, at last manifested in the fulness and symmetry of all Its constituent parts: '*Until we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*'

Such is the high and transcendent character of the union as centred in the Blessed Eucharist. Yet how full of simple and practical lessons is all this! Let us dwell a little on the sacramental life. It should set its stamp or impress on all our varied works. Let us sustain the consciousness of this in our penitentiary work—'*Not I, but Christ Who heals and restores*'; in our teaching work—'*Not I, but Christ living in me Who gives light and understanding to the simple*'; in our mission work at home or abroad—'*We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ the Lord.*'

How different would be all our work! how much more calm and patient and heavenly—the characteristics of the

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Divine work instead of the feeble, fitful, transitory work of man: '*Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*' It should give its tone and character to our lives; the whole life should be a reflection from the Divine Image—an emanation from the Divine Person Who dwells in us sacramentally. There should be in us a superiority to human foibles and outward circumstances: '*I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me.*' There will be the power of love—His love—overcoming likes and dislikes: '*Love one another as I have loved you.*' There will be—there should be—the unwavering Godward look: '*Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord.*' It should have its spring and source in our hearts. The fountain must be kept fresh and pure; pollutions and hindrances to the sacramental stream must be removed. The heart is the dwelling-place, the shrine of the Divine Presence.

To accomplish this we need careful self-discipline, self-examination, watchfulness, self-restraint: '*The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me*'; '*He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.*'

Address VII.

THE SPECIAL RELATION TO THE HOLY GHOST.

ANOTHER aspect of the union with the Father and the Son comes now into view—viz.: Our Special Relation to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Ghost, which this union involves.

This is to form the general subject of our meditations

to-day. It is a very important one, for the Holy Ghost is, so to speak, the bond of the Divine union, effecting and completing by the agency of His mysterious spiritual Personality this oneness between God and man, even as in mystery He binds in One the Persons of the Godhead: '*At that day*' (when the Holy Ghost is given) '*ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.*' As our Lord Jesus Christ is the Divine Substance of the union, so is the Holy Ghost the mysterious Agent through Whom the union takes effect. He unites in the everlasting bond the eternal Father and the eternal Son; He, too, by His spiritual agency, effectuates the union between the human and the Divine, and making us one with the Son, Who is One with the Father, makes us also in the First Begotten Son to be the sons of God and partakers of the Divine Nature: '*I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.*'

Another preliminary thought. In the allegory itself of the Vine and the Branches the Holy Ghost is not specifically mentioned. Yet observe, this allegory is introduced in the Divine discourse, into the very midst, so to speak, of the promise of the Holy Ghost. The preceding Chapter had revealed the coming manifestation of the Spirit, and, in part, His blessed work. The very union between the Vine and the Branches had already been spoken of as an issue of the Spirit's coming. And in the close of this Chapter (xv.) and in the next (xvi.) our Lord returns to the same great subject—the Coming and Office of the Holy Ghost. And thus this Parable of the Vine does not stand alone: it is interwoven into the great revelation of the Holy Ghost, and is an illustration not less of the Divine agency of the Spirit than of the Divine union with the Son.

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One other consideration. The part which the Holy Ghost fulfils in the Divine union is very strikingly brought out in Holy Scripture.

1. As regards the union of the Divine and the Human in the Person of Christ—*e.g.*, in the mystery of the Incarnation itself—‘He was conceived by the Holy Ghost’: ‘*That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*’

2. In the mystery of the Resurrection, where, again, the Human and the Divine are brought into mysterious contact. Here we notice the operation of the Holy Ghost: ‘*The Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead.*’

3. As regards our union with Christ, all the sacraments and mysteries of union connect themselves with special workings of the Holy Ghost. (a) Baptism: ‘*By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body.*’ (b) Confirmation. By the laying on of hands ‘*they received the Holy Ghost.*’ (c) The Holy Eucharist. It is the Holy Ghost, by Whose operation Christ is present, and dwells in us, and makes us one with Himself.

Thus, indeed, in those momentous words already quoted, our Blessed Lord seems to summarise all the Divine agency and the continuous operation of the Holy Ghost, along the whole line of His blessed and mysterious dispensation towards man, in the unfolding counsel and purpose of God to unite man with Himself in Christ Jesus: ‘*At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.*’

Let us now concentrate our thoughts on one reflection, and let it be this: the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is our great incentive to self-consecration, that we may retain and cherish this blessed Spirit. Let us remember how we

quench the light of the Spirit by the unsubdued self; let us seek to purify and consecrate all, that the Spirit of God may rule and reign in us; let us realise more the distinct fellowship of the Holy Ghost by special devotion to Him at least once a day; by continually seeking His inspiration and wisdom in all our life and work day by day in ejaculatory prayer: '*It is not ye that speak but the Spirit of your Father*'; by the calmness and regularity of our lives. Those in whom the Spirit dwells should be burning to subdue perturbations and distractions, to regulate impulses and excitements, staying the mind on God: '*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*' Realise the precious meaning of the promise, '*He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*' '*Cast me not away from Thy Presence: and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me*'; '*Let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.*'

Address VIII.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE DISPENSATION OF THE SON AND OF THE SPIRIT.

IN our last Meditation we considered our special relation to the Holy Ghost as effecting or bringing to pass the mystery of the Divine union with the Father and the Son. Let us proceed to consider further a point of much importance and of deep interest—viz.,—the relation between the dispensation of the Son and of the Spirit, their contrast and yet harmony; the harmonious and yet distinct office of each of the two Divine Persons in

working out the great purpose of the Father towards men.

And, first, the Son was God manifest in the Flesh; the Holy Ghost was God manifest in the Spirit. This makes at once a distinction. The Son was brought into contact with our earthly life, the Spirit especially with our inward and spiritual being; the Son dwelt and dwells among us, the Spirit dwells within us, God revealing Himself to both sides of our nature—in the Flesh and in the Spirit—bringing Himself into relation with all parts of our complex being:—the outward and temporary manifestation, followed by the spiritual and abiding one: ‘*It is expedient for you that I go away. I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever*’—the temporal and earthly superseded by the abiding and spiritual Presence of God. Though our Lord’s outward and visible Presence was withdrawn, His spiritual Presence abides. By the Spirit, ‘*I am with you always.*’ The Holy Spirit with us, and by His Presence effectuating the spiritual and abiding Presence of our Lord. The Holy Spirit is not substituted for Christ, but He makes Christ present. ‘*I will come to you*’ by the Spirit. So by the Spirit our Lord abides spiritually in the Church; and by the Spirit He is revealed to our spiritual apprehension, our inward being: ‘*The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me.*’ His Divine Humanity is present and is communicated to us by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Thus the Holy Ghost completes the manifestation of God to the whole of our nature. When He is come, ‘*He shall teach you all things.*’ ‘*He shall guide you into all the truth.*’

Let us maintain due proportion in our devotions to the Blessed Trinity, and be more careful to observe this

proportion. Each Divine Person is revealed in a certain relation to us. Each, so to speak, corresponds with and satisfies some special need of our being. We lose much of this satisfaction, much that we might receive, by disregarding this relation :

1. The Father—His protecting care and love.
2. The Son—His sympathy and compassion.
3. The Holy Ghost—His inward light and guidance.

How often are all our devotions addressed to one Person! How often do we neglect to worship the Holy Ghost! The Holy Spirit reveals this relation, and shows us the due proportion of our worship, by unfolding the nature of God and the special Office towards us of each of the Divine Persons, the characteristic attributes of Each, and our own need in our complex nature of the Presence and Office of each Person. *‘He shall teach you all things.’*

Let us consider, in the next place, the special relation and special Office of the Holy Spirit to our spirit.

1. He is the Inspirer of good desires, overcoming the infirmities of nature; He makes us *‘both to will and to do of His good pleasure.’*

2. He is the Enlightener in doubt, perplexity, and desolation of heart: *‘I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.’ ‘The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.’*

3. He is the Revealer of the Person of Christ to the soul: *‘He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.’ ‘He shall testify of Me.’*

If we worshipped the Holy Ghost more, if we realised His work more, we should apprehend more clearly the adorable Person of Christ. Seek the light of the Spirit, that you may know Him, that Christ may be manifest to

your spiritual apprehension, until at the last you ‘*see Him as He is.*’ Until ‘*beholding, as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same Image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*’

Address IX.

OUR CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GRACIOUS CALLS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

LET us now look back and consider for awhile in retrospect our correspondence in the past with the gracious calls and inspirations of the Holy Spirit. A Retreat brings us to a halting-place, a stage in our spiritual journey. We rest upon the mountain with God. The spiritual eye looks down from this eminence on the scene of life that has been traversed, and then upward to the ascending path that lies before us. Take then a survey of the past, and this not idly, or morbidly, or with mere regrets, or self-satisfaction, but with the distinct purpose of seeking guidance for the time to come, considering how we may tread the path of the future with firmer footsteps and more unswerving eye. ‘*Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart,*’ as we think of the past. ‘*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills*’—let this be our watchword as we think of the future.

Another thought in this retrospect is that the relation of the Holy Spirit to us is a personal relation. It is not merely a question as to whether we have been moved by certain influences or not. It is rather whether we have obeyed a personal call ; listened to, or turned away from,

a living Voice ; followed up or not the inspirations and pleadings of a living Person. The relation of the Holy Spirit to us is distinctly personal.

1. He is the Comforter or Paraclete. How far have we sought His strength and leaned upon His advocacy, instead of shaping our own way and making our own plans ?

2. He is the Guide into all truth. Have we diligently looked for His illumination in meditation, in the revelation of the mysteries of the Faith, in life and work, for His guidance in perplexity ?

3. He is the Teacher of all things. What lessons have we learned of God's will for us, of our submission to His will, of the meaning of love, of the power of prayer, of the joy of self-sacrifice, of the surrender of self ?

4. He is the Convincer of sin. How far has He convinced us each one of our own sins, and taught us to know ourselves in His sight ?

In taking our retrospect let us try to realise this personal relationship ; for He dwells in us and abides with us as the Guest of our souls : *'He dwelleth with you and shall be in you.'*

Let us consider three points of self-inquiry. Are we grieving the Spirit ? failing to correspond with His grace ? not realising His Presence in us ?

1. There is the unsubdued self—pride, self-will, envy, sensitiveness, which must all grieve Him : *'The fruit of the Spirit is love.'*

2. There are uncontrolled words—disparaging, thoughtless, unloving words—which must grieve Him : *'Set a watch O Lord before my mouth ; and keep the door of my lips.'*

3. Another subject for self-inquiry is how far we correspond with the Holy Spirit in realising the life of union

of which He is the bond. Your vocation is to a life of special union with your Lord. The Holy Spirit calls you to this life, guides you through its difficulties, fills you with its joy. Have you been following on, realising the call to special union with Christ, not merely to Community life or useful work, but to a special consecration of body and soul to Christ your Lord? ‘*My Beloved is mine, and I am His*’; considering also the sorrow of the union, that we must have ‘*fellowship in His sufferings*’; bearing in the body ‘*the marks of the Lord Jesus?*’

4. Consider, lastly, the joy of the union. Yes, the joy. It is not all sacrifice or suffering: ‘*That My joy might remain in you.*’ How? ‘*The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy*’—the joy of love, because you love Him and He loves you; the joy of trust, because you know Whom you have believed; the joy of light, because you see Him more and more; the joy of sorrow, because He lifts up the light of His countenance upon you and gives you peace. Resolve then to rise up and correspond with the call and guidance of the Holy Spirit: ‘*Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory.*’

Address X.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPED BY THIS UNION.

Church Life.

LET us consider on this closing day of our Retreat some of the forms of life developed by this union: (1) Church life, (2) Community life, (3) Personal life. Let us take the first of the three at present—Church life, described by

St. Paul thus: *'As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.'*

The Life of the Church is, in fact, the Life of Christ diffused through the members of the one Body. We have been dwelling on the Divine union. By virtue of the union of the Church with the Lord, His Life flows into and pervades all Her being. As St. Paul says in another place: He is the Head of the Body (the Church) *'from Whom the whole Body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body, unto the edifying of itself in love.'*

The parables of the Vine and of the Body supplement each other. In the first the main thought is this: Our Lord imparting His Life as the Vine to the branches, uniting us to Himself—the Divine union by virtue of the Divine Life. In the second, the figure or illustration from the human body and its members; we look at the same truth from the converse side and contemplate the Divine Life by virtue of the Divine union. We are led, in other words, to consider not only the Divine Life creating the Divine union, but also conversely the union with our Divine Lord and Head thus created, as issuing in the full and continuous participation of the Divine Life.

And this is Church life—the diffusion of the Life of Christ through the members of His mystical Body by virtue of their incorporation into and union with Him. The members of the Body live because of their union with the Head. The Life flows down and pervades the whole Body. And so, again, St. Paul says: Christ is *'Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him That filleth all in all.'*

This is a deeply interesting subject, and abounding in practical lessons and reflections. Let us consider some of them.

I. The largeness of the conception. Our minds rest in this conception upon the Church as a whole, the whole Catholic Church of Christ; not merely our own Branch of it, but all the Branches of the one true Vine, all the members of the one mystical Body of Christ. Loyalty to our own Branch is a primary, a divine duty, because God Himself has placed us where we are. Fancies, predilections for other Branches, faults and imperfections in our own Branch have nothing to do with the question. The Church of our own land is the Church in which God has placed us. Loyalty we are bound to give, yet not in the spirit of narrow isolation, as though there were no perfection out of ourselves, no beauty and no truth outside and beyond the corners of the Prayer-Book. Rather let us lament our own deficiencies, and correct them, ready to impart to others what we have, and to receive what they can give. We have need to beware of narrowness and self-sufficiency—of our too insular notions of the Church and of truth. No, ‘*the Body is One, and hath many members.*’

The reunion of Christendom should be a great object, and a continual subject of our prayers. Never let us be so self-satisfied as to cease to desire union, never so content with our own attainments or position as to forget or grow cold in prayer for the reunion of the whole Body, ‘*that they all may be one.*’

II. The manifoldness of Church life. A religious Community is in one sense a Church in miniature. Certainly it aims at certain distinct objects, it sets before itself counsels of perfection, it seeks to concentrate and intensify its union with the Head; but still, its life, like that of

the Church, must be a manifold life. This life shows a variety of works and interests: '*It bringeth forth much fruit.*' There are in it diversities of types of character. It is very important to realise this in nurturing or training or employing the members, so as to utilise the varieties of character and disposition, and not to press all into one narrow and uniform mould. Secure, of course, the great principles of the Religious Life, but let them be developed in the manifoldness of the Church's life: '*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*'

III. The concentration of Church life is another important aspect of this subject, which is the relation of the Community to Church life. As you receive of the manifoldness of that life, so you must give back, as a Religious Community, intensity of life. The Religious Community should be a nucleus, a centre, a spring of life for the Church. Here should be the principles of Christian truth and practice in their reality, their entirety, their full vigour. So that as the Church is '*the salt of the earth,*' the Religious Community should in a certain sense be the salt of the Church. This is a very important office for Communities, in the present day of false and sceptical liberalism, and the rejection alike of fixed dogma in faith and strict rule in practice. The Life of Jesus manifested in a Religious Community that its power may rest upon the whole Church: '*Abide in Me, and I in you.*'

Let us remember this 'nucleus' depends on the individual members of the Community. Each one true to Vocation, each one to realise the union with Christ, each one to stamp on the life the Divine Image, the large charity, the unstinted self-sacrifice, the fulness of devotion, the surrender and consecration of the whole being. So shall you keep the source and the centre pure, the

‘nucleus’ sound, contributing each one your own part to keep the light burning, the life vigorous, the love Christ-like, and fulfil your office in intensifying and invigorating the Church’s life: ‘*Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*’

Address XI.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPED BY THIS UNION (*continued*).

Community Life.

WE have dwelt on Church life as developed by the Divine union. Let us consider another form of life — Community life. This form of life has a special interest for those who are members of a Religious Community—seeking to realise in its highest form and under its holiest aspects the oneness of a common life—‘Church life’: ‘*We, being many, are one Body in Christ.*’ ‘Community life’: ‘*Everyone members one of another.*’ The life closer and more concentrated, for the union with each other in a Community involves a Divine relationship. It is knit together by supernatural ties, not of flesh and blood, but of the Spirit of God. A Religious Community is a kind of picture of the earliest and purest Church life. They ‘*were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common,*’ sharing not only temporal goods one with another, but the powers and gifts of the Divine Life. Let us think of this in its many interesting points.

The supernatural bond, is a distinct feature of a

Religious Community; not the bond merely of mutual interests or natural affections, but the Higher Bond—not of the world or of the flesh, but of the Spirit of God. Let us realise this in the overcoming of natural dislikes and antipathies. There are dispositions of different kinds in a Community; all are not naturally congenial; there is possibility of association with the uncongenial; *'If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?'* But *'love your enemies'*—your opposites. *'This is My commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you.'*

Consider the control and regulation of special affections. Special affections are for the most part natural. By cherishing them without control you degenerate from the supernatural to the natural love. They are often self-gratifying. So the love of the Community loses its unselfish, Christlike, supernatural character. Let us control and regulate rather than quench special affections. Avoid idolatry of the creature, and worship and love God only with a supreme devotion: *'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.'*

So truly is the Religious Life the school of Divine graces. Community life has its trials: the changes of scene and lot, the uncongenial work, the clashing of tastes and dispositions. There is a danger to the spiritual life in all this, unless the trials be met and borne in a Christlike spirit. But if so borne there is great blessing. Further, in all this there is a daily discipline of patience, of forbearance, of unselfishness, of self-control, of submission of will, of loving trustfulness. These great graces are proved and exercised by trials, without which they never would have been: He was made *'perfect through sufferings.'* So it is also in Community Life. The character formed

is strangely different according as the purpose of special trials is realised or not. It may deteriorate or it may be elevated to the supernatural order; some souls may become more hard and selfish, while others are raised above themselves. Hence the jealousies and heartburnings which sometimes fester in a Community, to the saddening of lives and the weakening and loss of grace in the whole. The special trials of the Life are not realised and overcome; their purpose is not fulfilled. It is thwarted by the devices of Satan and the infirmities of nature; the Apostle's injunction is unheeded:—*'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'*

Let us now consider the shelter of the Religious Home, its sacredness and peace.

1. There is the separation from the tumults of the world: *'The wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'*

2. There is the withdrawal from the conflicts of the Church: *'In the secret place of His Tabernacle shall He hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.'*

3. There are the ever-recurrent Offices of prayer and praise and of the Holy Eucharist. *'Seven times a day will I praise Thee.'* *'My trust shall be under the shadow of Thy wings.'*

Thus souls are nurtured and brought up; planted as in the Garden of the Lord, closed in as from the wastes of this troubled world and its sin and evil, and in due time gathered to the Eternal Home, the holy place of the Most High, the everlasting scene of love and union in the very Presence of the Lamb, and to the community of saints made perfect: Where *'His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His Face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads.'* Yea, when the Bride of the Lamb,

‘*arrayed in fair linen, clean and white,*’ shall gaze for ever on the Face of the Heavenly Bridegroom, at length satisfied with the Joy that can never be taken away: ‘*My Beloved is Mine, and I am His.*’

Address XII.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPED BY THIS UNION (*continued*).

Individual Life.

LET us consider, as our Retreat closes, one other form of life developed by the Divine union—viz., our own individuality, our separate personal existence. Never lose sight of this. The outward history of the Church and the associated life of the Community are bearing continually upon and helping to form the individual life and character of each one; each life is receiving its own personal stamp and impress. And when it has passed through its probation here, moulded by the manifold influences of life, acted upon by the powers of the world to come, an object of special solicitude and love in its own separate and personal being to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, it will still be itself, and as itself will stand before God in the great Day of Account and ‘*at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*’ Think then of the mystery of this personal being.

1. And first—to refer back for a moment to the Parable of Divine union in the Vine and the Branches—note the individual reference: ‘*Every branch that beareth fruit.*’ The heavenly Husbandman deals with each single branch,

chastens, tends, cleanses, judges it, according to its need and purpose.

2. Each individual life is a separate creation of grace. There is the Father's special love and care: '*It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish.*' There is the Son's seeking and leading: He goeth '*after that which is lost until He find it.*' There are the Holy Spirit's special gifts—the call, the gift, the work to each one: '*The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*' The Divine union between God and man is a personal union, the drawing of each human soul into union with the Divine Nature: '*Christ liveth in me.*' The well-being of the whole body, whether Church or Community, is dependent on the action and vigour of each separate member: '*Compacted by that which every joint supplieth.*'

How have we fulfilled our own part in the Church or Community? What has been our own separate contribution to the well-being or to the injury of the whole? How has our character told upon the Community? '*Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*' Let us now concentrate our thoughts on some special points.

I. The force of outward circumstances weakens the consciousness of this personal life. So it is even in a Religious Community. There are the distractions of work; there are the external interests. Our relation to others, friendships, affections, worries and anxieties, occupy and engross our thoughts and make us forget the culture of our own real selves. There is a right and a wrong sense of self-forgetfulness: These things '*choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*'

II. Another point is the personal life in its relation to others. The personal life must not be selfish or self-absorbed: '*Christ pleased not Himself.*' We should cultivate an interest in others, be anxious for their well-being, and glad to share with them duties and privileges. The secret of the influence of the personal self on others is not conscious power or use of influence, but the unselfishness, the elevation of the personal life telling silently: '*Let your light so shine before men*' silently and naturally. Let us think especially of the personal life in its relation to our Blessed Lord. The union of ourselves with Him is a great consideration, especially in your high Vocation:—the Sister, the Bride of the Lamb. Again, personal life is not self-contained, but blended and united with the Divine Life—the union of the spiritual Bride and Bridegroom.

There are many momentous issues from these considerations. One is that they are a safeguard against excessive self-introspection. There is a tendency to this in earnest minds, in a desire for self-purification. But it is a snare of Satan. Never forget in this respect the union with your Lord. Look out of self to Him: '*Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord.*' Let us also remember the subtle danger of spiritual ambition—the desire to be too perfect, too high, to '*sit on the right hand and on the left,*' to be the most privileged, the most beloved. Rather seek to suffer for, to work with, Him, as one with Him, as desiring all from Him: '*Christ is all and in all.*'

III. The great aim and end of the personal life is to become worthy of the Divine union: '*His wife hath made herself ready*'; '*Arrayed in fine linen, clean and white*'—the bridal robe of sanctity from which each spot of selfishness, each taint of sin, is being washed out and purged away till it is meet for the Divine union: '*The King's daughter*

is all glorious within : her clothing is of wrought gold. Cherish this thought continually—the thought of your personal union with your blessed Lord—(1) in the aim of your life ; (2) in the devotion of self ; (3) in meditation on His word ; (4) in the Divine Communion of His Body and Blood, the perpetual receiving of Himself in the mystery of His love : ‘ *Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.*’

So, dear Sisters, may you love and serve Him here for a season in the outer courts of the palace, and be led in at length to the inner glories of His throne, to share the fulness of the light ineffable, and the joy and bliss that passeth all understanding : ‘ *To see Him as He is.*’ So, in the end and issue of all, may your Lord grant you—the virgin followers of the Virgin Mother—a place in His *many Mansions*, and may those words of the Psalmist be fulfilled in each one : ‘ *The virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company and shall be brought unto Thee. With joy and gladness shall they be brought : and shall enter into the King’s palace.*’



Notes of Addresses delivered at Clewer, 1888, and at Wantage, 1891.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

ONCE again, dear Sisters, our Blessed Lord calls us by His Spirit into Retreat. Listen to His Voice: '*Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile.*' What do we propose in this season of Retreat?

1. It is a season of refreshment in the midst of our toils and struggles. We gather together, each from our separate spheres of labour, and ascend from the level plain of our daily lives to the mountain of God, to the home of our souls, addressing as we come our prayer to the Holy Spirit:

'Thou of Comforters the best,
Thou the soul's most welcome guest,
Sweet refreshment here below:
In our labour rest most sweet,
Grateful coolness in the heat,
Solace in the midst of woe.'

2. So it is not only a time of withdrawal from daily toil, but of special access to our Lord. '*We come apart,*' but it is to be more close to Him, to dwell more immediately under the shadow of His Presence, amid the sweet

consolations of His Spirit. Expect each one a message, a counsel, a loving word of warning or of comfort from Him. The Comforter *'shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance.'* Especially expect a gift of peace: *'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you.'*

3. The attitude of mind for Retreat is one of quiet but earnest expectation, not over-anxious at the beginning, not despondent, even if disappointed. Let us dwell on this condition, and resolve: *'I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me: for He shall speak peace.'* *'I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.'*

What shall be our special subject? A connected narrative of spiritual instruction leading us on step by step seems most helpful. Let us take the journey to Emmaus, one of the most deeply interesting of the Resurrection narratives. Like many of them, it is a representation or parable of the spiritual life. We see here:—

1. The deep sorrows of the soul, its disappointments and perplexities.

2. The communications of the Lord by way of reproof or consolation.

3. The power of the Scriptures to kindle the heart and make it *'burn within us.'*

4. The revelation of the Holy Eucharist, the spiritual vision of the Lord: *'Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.'*

Such are some of the main points in the narrative. May our dear Lord, Who thus manifested Himself to the disciples at Emmaus, make Himself known to us. May He clear up some perplexity, remove some doubt, deliver from some tyranny of sin, kindle new fervour

by His word, reveal in the Blessed Sacrament some new vision of His love and power, that we may go henceforth on our way rejoicing. And for ourselves let us respond to His grace, not in momentary feelings, not in passing desires, but in some definite and settled resolution bearing on our devotional life and on our practical life.

Address I.

THE DESOLATE PATH.

THE narrative opens with the record of the desolate journey of the two disciples: '*They walked, and were sad.*' Let us think of the sources of their desolation.

1. There was the loss of the expected Christ; something like St. Mary Magdalene's sorrow and desolation at the graveside: '*They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.*' Their Teacher, their Lord, their Friend, their Redeemer, had gone. Still the wonderful prophecies continued to hold true, and His own words also: '*Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.*'

2. There was the shock to faith: '*We trusted that it had been He Which should have redeemed Israel,*' but our trust is shattered. Doubts and distress of mind are a feature in the Resurrection narratives. We are reminded of St. Thomas's doubts: '*Except I shall see, . . . I will not believe.*' It is a spiritual experience, the failing of faith: '*My Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: My soul failed when He spake: I sought Him, but I could not find Him.*'

3. The uncertainty of the future. This is another source of desolation and despondency. The hopes they had cherished, the plans they had formed, the view of Christ and His kingdom—all had broken down. Life itself had to be reconstructed on new lines. A new vocation, a new work must be sought. They must seek another Lord, begin life again, enter on a new path with the light withdrawn and no new light yet visible: *'We know not whither Thou goest,'* whither Thou art leading us, *'and how can we know the way?'*

Such is the groundwork of our meditation. To concentrate thought, let us fix on one point, and let it be this: Spiritual desolation in some of its aspects,—the withdrawal of our Lord's Presence. Its causes should be a special subject for self-inquiry in Retreat. They may arise from secret, unsubdued sin with its havoc in the soul, and its blight. The soul is thus Satan's prey. Consider its subtlety. It is possible even under the active forms of sanctity and the active efforts and surroundings of the Religious Life: *'Cleanse thou me from my secret faults.'* Or there may be a gradual declension of love and devotion: *'The love of many shall wax cold.'* Is it so with any of us? Search and see. A Retreat is a new starting-point for the recovery of first love. *'I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love.'* Seasons of spiritual desertion occur even without a specific cause, as in the narrative, *'We walk, and are sad.'* *'Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face?'* The answer to the question may take this form: Possibly, it is to lead us to deeper self-knowledge—*'Try out my reins and my heart'*; or to kindle our desires after Christ—*'My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God'*; or to exercise our faith and trust—*'O tarry thou the Lord's leisure; Be strong, and He shall*

comfort thine heart, and put thou thy trust in the Lord. Think of these aspects of spiritual desolation, and ground on them a resolution : To gain the mastery over secret sin ; or to stir ourselves up from indifference ; or to be trustful in trials of faith. And He will return ; He will give light and love ; He will kindle our love more and more : *'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.'*

Address II.

THE ABSORBING INTEREST.

LET us pass on to another point following the order of the narrative—*'They talked together of all these things which had happened'* ; let our subject be—The absorbing interest of the one topic of thought and conversation. This is very instructive as indicating the earnestness of their sorrow. It is, too, very important. There are varying shades of sorrow ; some are selfish, some murmuring, some submissive, some trustful. The two disciples were earnest and resigned, but not trustful : *'Sorrow hath filled your heart.'* Let us also notice the deeply sacred character of their conversation : *'They talked together of all these things'*—i.e., of the Passion and of the (as yet unrealised) Resurrection. There was no attempt to dissipate sorrow by mere distraction. Let us ourselves avoid this, for how often we may thus lose the blessings of a time of sorrow !

With the two disciples there was a discussion of the great realities of the situation. They faced facts earnestly ; their loss : the Death : the vanished hope of the Redemption of Israel. Let us remember the sacredness of the

topics and the earnest spirit in which they were discussed. But notice also the nearness of Jesus: '*Jesus Himself drew near,*' as He ever will to those in earnest sorrow, to those who in sorrow seek Him: '*and went with them*' '*The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him*'; '*They that feared the LORD spake often one to another, and the LORD hearkened.*'

Such is the outline of our meditation; it suggests several points for special thought. Let us select this one: What are the really absorbing interests of our lives? This is a question we should ask in Retreat. What are they—our Religious Life, our work? Alas! how many other earthly motives and interests enter in, and we are diverted from the central interest of all in a true Sister's life—the greater glory of God.

Let me caution you, my Sisters, against trifles in thought and conversation, trifling vexations, trifling interests, trifling words, trifling griefs. How much time they take up! Have you not found yourselves dwelling for a whole day on some trifling injury? So life is frittered away, self-love is cherished and fostered, the character is enfeebled, the mind weakened '*by things wherein is no profit.*' We must be always lifting the aims and thoughts of the life out of secularity and out of self, not making ourselves the centre: '*O set me up upon the Rock that is higher than I.*' There is a danger in the Religious Life of getting self-absorbed; and Community life sometimes fosters the danger, narrowing our range of view: '*Look not everyone on his own things, but everyone also on the things of others.*' The correction for all this secret self-love is the meditation on the great truths of the Faith—the '*things which had happened,*' the Passion and the Resurrection.

Meditation takes us out of self; and brings us face to face with great and Divine realities: '*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh my help.*' '*We are come unto Mount Zion.*' It enlarges our view, widening the horizon of our minds: '*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*'; '*My heart hath talked of Thee, Seek ye My Face: Thy Face, Lord, will I seek.*' Is it so? '*Seek ye*' as the true interest and the worthy aim of life. Let our answer be, '*Thy Face, Lord, will I seek.*'

Address III.

THE UNRECOGNISED PRESENCE.

WE pass on now to consider the unrecognised Presence of our Lord: He '*drew near and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.*' Let us take this for our subject this evening. This spiritual fact is constantly forced upon our attention in Holy Scripture and in the course of the world's history. Great interpositions of the Divine Presence are unrealised by the world. The days of Noah, the days of Lot, the days of the Son of Man, the appearance of our Lord in the Flesh—the Incarnation: '*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.*' '*Lord, when Thy hand is lifted up they will not see.*'

Still more remarkable in the Church's life is the same mysterious hiddenness of the Divine Presence. So with the Apostles before the Passion: '*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?*' And

after the Resurrection: '*The disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*'

So also it has been with many movements and visitations in the Church's course from the beginning—*e.g.*, those in the midst of which we live, the revival of the Religious Life and of Religious Communities. Yet surely '*God is in the midst of her,*' and now and then we see '*One like unto the Son of Man*' . . . '*Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*' There is the same hiddenness in the Sacraments and mysteries of our religion: '*Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself*'; '*Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.*' There is the same mystery in the individual life. It is a spiritual experience that the nearness of our Lord is not always realised in trial, in blessing, in the events of life, or in doubt and darkness: '*Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.*' But in the retrospect of life it is perceived. He has been near us and with us; '*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*'

Such is the groundwork of our Meditation. How many reflections it suggests! Let us gather up some of these.

1. The dulness of our spiritual vision; the '*eyes holden*' that we do not know Him. What '*holds*' our spiritual eyes? Is it sadness, or earthly views and conceptions, or some secret fault or sin? We see Him not: '*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?*'

2. The unperceived nearness of Jesus. '*Jesus Himself drew near.*' How comforting and assuring in temptation!—'*When thou walkest through the waters I will be with thee.*' In unrewarded labour, as on the Galilean lake, in loneliness: '*I will allure her . . . and speak comfortably unto her.*' When all seems desolate and there is none to

help, '*Thou, God, seest me.*' '*Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.*'

3. The revelation of His Presence, as in the sequel of the narrative: '*Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.*' He will reveal Himself in due time. The discipline of waiting will be blessed: '*I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for Him.*' The inspiration of desire will be satisfied. Learn to trust. This is the assurance of Divine love: '*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.*'

Address IV.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF HOPE.

ONE special feature in this remarkable history which comes more prominently before us as we pursue the narrative is the great disappointment of the disciples' hopes: '*We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel*'; and we have been disappointed by His crucifixion and death. This seems to have extinguished every hope.

What were the causes of this disappointment? Primarily, the great catastrophe which had closed our Lord's earthly Life—the shameful death upon the Cross: '*The chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him.*' Their hopes and anticipations of His glory were blighted, for they had had no idea of a suffering Redeemer. They shared the same idea that shame and suffering were inconsistent with the claims of the Messiah, as formerly St. Peter: '*This shall not be*

unto Thee.' In the words of St. Augustine: 'They had lost faith, they had lost hope. They were walking, the dead with the Living; the dead with Life Itself.'

Secondly, the disappointment arose from the mistaken and erroneous preconceptions of the nature of our Lord's life and work. They looked for outward glory only: '*Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*' They did not realise that earthly humiliation and suffering are the conditions of Divine glory. Prophets had hinted beforehand at the suffering Messiah. The Apostles learned it afterwards. He was made '*perfect through sufferings.*' '*He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him.*' Our Lord Himself in this very narrative asserts the same truth: '*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*' From this groundwork let us proceed to gather a point of special reflection—disappointment in the spiritual life.

I. Disappointment is a very great and critical trial in the soul's history, and is often experienced. It comes from: (a) Unrealised expectations, blighting our first fervour; difficulties and failures and obstacles in our spiritual course, especially in our ideal of the Religious Life. It is so different from what was anticipated that it has become a severe shock to our faith and hope. '*We trusted that it had been*' so, but it is not, and we say with the Psalmist: '*Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and forgettest our misery and trouble? For our soul is brought low, even to the dust.*' (b) Mistaken or imperfect views of our Lord's service, and of the nature of our union with Him. This, as with the disciples, is a real cause of disappointment. Human feelings and ideas may often be a

help and refreshment, but they are not the test of truth: '*I said, It is mine own infirmity.*' Suffering in some form, bodily or spiritual, is the very test of our faith, the very mark of the Cross. It lifts us above earthly feeling; exercises our perseverance; disciplines our trust; strengthens the spiritual life. '*Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in Thy law.*' '*I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*'

II. The issue of the trial. It is very critical if not borne in faith and accepted cheerfully, but most blessed if it is so borne. Its issue is then a calm, spiritual, unfailing peacefulness and rest in God, independent of human feeling. The Religious Life is not built upon the shifting sands of human feelings and hopes, but founded upon the Rock, and that Rock is Christ: '*O set me up upon the Rock that is higher than I.*' This is our great consolation and encouragement, which, in disappointments becomes the assurance of our faith and love. Resolve, then, to persevere. '*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*' '*Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*'

Address V.

SPIRITUAL PERPLEXITIES.

So far we have dwelt on the disappointment of hope or spiritual disappointment. Let us pass on now to another and a kindred subject—perplexity in the spiritual life. Notice the perplexity of the two disciples: '*Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished . . . but Him they saw not.*' Let us examine briefly the elements of this perplexity.

1. Bewilderment, astonishment, conflicting thoughts, reports of the women, reports of the disciples, the rumour of His Resurrection, yet Himself unseen: '*Him they saw not.*'

2. A further element is the mysterious communication, as from heaven. They '*had seen a vision of angels*'; they had been brought near to heavenly realities, to the atmosphere of the unseen world.

3. Another element in their perplexity was the invisibility of the Lord's Presence. '*Him they saw not.*' The sepulchre was empty, the Resurrection possible, yet the Lord Himself unseen. How could His words be true?—'*I will see you again.*' '*The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me.*' '*Wherefore hidest Thou Thy Face and forgettest our misery and trouble?*' Still, as they saw Him not, they cried: '*Show Thyself, Thou that sittest between the Cherubims.*'

This subject is important and practical, for the experiences of very few are without perplexity. Think of this for a little.

I. The strangeness of God's dealings bewilders us. Why does God order this and permit that in the events of life? in the power of evil within and around us? in unaccountable dispensations of prosperity or adversity? in the work of grace, disappointment and failure? The ungodly prosper, the righteous are troubled, or, coming within ourselves, our own ideas and hopes unrealised—*e.g.*, the power of temptation and of besetting sins clinging and lasting. '*Thou hast not delivered Thy people at all.*' '*When I would do good, evil is present with me.*'

II. Besides this, another ground of perplexity is found in doubts and questionings as to mysteries of the Faith. Here are many causes of perplexity: (a) Our imperfect

faculties ; (b) the assaults of Satan on the faith ; (c) temptations intellectual as well as moral. Many doubts are the result of a disordered spiritual state—the eye blinded, the ear heavy. We must *‘walk by faith, not by sight.’*

III. Another continual source of perplexity is the dimness or the hiding of our Lord’s Presence : *‘Him they saw not.’* How true, how great, a perplexity in the Spiritual Life ! There are dark seasons appointed for us : *‘We wait for light, but behold obscurity ; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.’* Prayers are cold, and seem unanswered. God is far off : *‘Wherefore hidest Thou Thy Face ?’*

This may be a special trial at Holy Communion to humble us, and to prove us, and to stimulate us to perseverance. Our Lord is present, but our eyes are holden. The Eucharistic revelation is not to the senses or to the feelings, but to the inner spirit—calm, silent, unperceived by sense, because penetrating below the surface, beneath our sentient and emotional nature.

There is often an after-sweetness and fragrance, *‘as of myrrh, aloes, and cassia,’* from His garments. *‘What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.’* *‘The Vision is yet for an appointed time. . . . Though it tarry, wait for It.’*

Address VI.

THE DIVINE ANSWER TO OUR PERPLEXITIES.

It is of great interest to observe and to dwell upon the Lord’s answer to the perplexed disciples : *‘O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken !’*

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Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? Let us consider this to-night, and notice two important points.

1. The reproof of the understanding and of the heart—*ανόητος*: undiscerning, unintelligent, unreasoning; *βραδεῖς τῆ καρδίᾳ*: dulness of heart. Let us draw this out further. Their understanding should have inferred from the Scriptures a truer view of Christ. Their hearts should have been more set on spiritual, as contrasted with earthly desires, more alive to spiritual realities.

2. Another point comes out in our Lord's answer. The very things which perplexed them should have been the ground of assurance. The sufferings of Christ were the very proof of His Messiahship, and the very earnest of His glory and triumph: '*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*' How often is this the experience of the spiritual life! We pass through doubts to stronger faith; our darkness becomes light. We see afterwards in the mysterious dispensations of our lives that our sorrow becomes our joy: '*My ways are not your ways, nor My thoughts your thoughts.*' '*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*'

Such is the answer of our Lord. Let us meditate together on this Divine answer. What points does it suggest?

1. Perplexity is often a trial of earnest minds. Notice the earnestness of the two disciples. This is not to be wondered at, nor is it necessarily discouraging, but it involves danger if not dealt with wisely, lovingly, and trustfully. Doubts may strengthen faith, as in the case of St. Thomas. Perplexity may lead to a truer knowledge of God and of His ways. Hard thoughts of God are a

frequent snare in perplexity. Let us guard against this: '*Trust ye in the Lord for ever.*' The Religious Life is not free from perplexity. Our Lord would try and test us; cling to Him, constrain Him to abide: '*Abide with us.*' '*And He went in to tarry with them.*'

2. One cause of perplexity is the feebleness of our reason. So it was with the two disciples—*ἀνόητοι*: the mental faculties imperfect. Yet we often reason about the dealings of God and the mysteries of the Faith as if we were competent to understand them, when it is really not so. '*We see through a glass darkly.*' We need, like the disciples, to have the understanding '*opened,*' that we may understand the words of God. Pray daily for the illumination of the Holy Spirit: '*He shall guide you into all truth.*'

3. The great source of all our perplexities is our spiritual or moral condition. Self is the great hindrance—our disordered self; the heart not wholly His; the will not fully surrendered; our mixed and selfish motives blinding us; the eye dim; the ear heavy: '*O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults.*' Remissness in personal devotion; not maintaining the union with our Lord; imperceptibly getting far from Him. '*Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still.*'

Address VII.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST THE CENTRAL IDEA OF HOLY
SCRIPTURE.

So far we have followed the path of the two disciples in their sorrows and perplexities. And we have listened to the answer which our Lord made, the loving reproofs and consolations which He administered to them. We reach now a new stage in this journey leading to a further development in our Lord's revelation of Himself—viz., the Exposition of the Scriptures: '*Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*' This important subject, this method of the revelation of Himself, is now to occupy our thoughts in one or other of its aspects.

The special thought which arrests our attention is this—the Person of Jesus the central Idea of Scripture: '*He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*'

1. In the law: '*The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.*' All the types and sacrifices pointed to Him, and to His Divine Person—'*The blood of bulls and goats*' to the '*Blood of Christ,*' or, rather, to Himself; '*Lo, I come*'; '*the Lamb of God Which taketh away the sin of the world.*'

2. In the Prophets the Person of Christ emerges yet more clearly: '*The Prophets have inquired and searched diligently . . . searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it*

testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.' How clear, for instance, is the Person of Christ in that marvellous chapter, Isaiah liii. !—the suffering and triumphant Messiah, the '*Man of sorrows,*' the righteous Servant, the great Conqueror through suffering. So it is said in Acts viii. 35: Philip '*began from the same Scripture (Isa. liii.) and preached unto him Jesus.*'

3. In the Psalms. The Psalms are especially indicative of Christ's Person. So that our Blessed Lord takes up their words as His own: '*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*' '*Into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit.*' '*The same Stone which the builders refused is become the Headstone in the corner.*' So also St. Peter:—'*The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.*' '*Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell: neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.*' Thus the Person of Jesus is the central Idea in all the Scriptures.

Let us fix on some one point to bring this home to us—viz., our Life in Christ is a Life of Personal Union, especially in the Religious Life. And let us consider this union under three aspects.

1. In the call to the Consecrated Life—a call to closer union with Himself. Our Lord's human Vocation was to do entirely the Father's will. Your call to the Religious Life is, in union with Him, '*to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*'; to say in the spirit of the *Magnificat*, '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*'

2. In self-sacrificing work for others: '*He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His Life a*

ransom for many.' Let this be your aim in your various works: In the penitentiary, with Him 'to seek and to save' the lost; in nursing, with Him to 'heal the sick,' and to 'comfort those that mourn'; in mission work, to 'gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad'; in teaching, with Him and for Him to train and teach souls. And all this, whichever it be, in a self-renouncing spirit: 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'

3. In the perfecting of your own nature. To make it more worthy of God, more meet for union with your Lord, spiritual brides of the Heavenly Bridegroom, Who was made 'perfect through sufferings' by the discipline and experience of His life on earth. This must be yours also, in personal union with Him.

The steps towards this perfection are found in: The increased power over temptation; in the more faithful doing of your appointed work for God; in the more perfectly conformed will. Thus will you, little by little, be 'changed into the same Image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' Cherish, then, this ever-deepening and personal union with your Lord. Gaze upon the Person of Jesus, and, as you gaze, pray that you may be thus transformed into His likeness: 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.' 'When I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.'

Address VIII.

SPIRITUAL FERVOUR.

LET us now continue our subject—viz., the Scriptures as a method of the revelation of Christ. For another thought connected with this purpose of Holy Scripture is suggested to us in the exclamation of the disciples in verse 32: ‘*Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?*’ ‘Kindling of Heart,’ ‘Spiritual Fervour’—let us take this for our subject.

In the narrative of the later part of the journey to Emmaus our attention is drawn very significantly to two distinct methods of the manifestation of Christ: (1) The Opening of the Scriptures; (2) the Breaking of the Bread; and the special character of each manifestation is no less clearly indicated.

Let us consider first the burning of the heart, the kindling of the emotions, as the result of the opening of the Scriptures, and, afterwards, the Divine Vision or the recognition of Christ: ‘*Their eyes were opened*’; ‘*He was known of them in Breaking of Bread.*’ Here we have the Scriptural and the Eucharistic revelation.

We are concerned now with the Scriptural revelation; and one feature of this is that it kindles the feelings and affections—makes the heart to burn. Christ our Lord, as the Scriptures are opened, approaches us on this—the sentient or emotional side—of our nature, and excites the fervour of our desires: ‘*My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?*’ How wide and inter-

esting a field of thought! Can we not call to mind fervent and holy desires rising in us during our study of Holy Scripture; or of some stirring exhortation; some glowing promise; the heart kindling at the examples of lives set before us in Holy Scripture? What has been their bearing, their lasting effect upon our spiritual lives? Again our feelings and affections are kindled by Devotional Books, or by an inspiring Address or Sermon; how far is our spiritual life permanently influenced in this way, or our true life in Christ deepened and strengthened?

Let us set ourselves to think of this. It is a question for our meditation.

1. Spiritual fervour is not to be despised; it has its own special work in the progress of the soul towards God. It is well compared to the budding flower in the natural world and its part in the formation of the seed and the after-development of the fruit. Mr. Isaac Williams beautifully speaks of such feelings: 'They indeed partake more of what is human in us than what is Divine; engaging they are in themselves and beautiful to the natural man, and seem to serve, to the human soul, the same purpose that flowers do in the natural world towards the formation of the seed; their colours and fragrance they derive from the dews and the air and the light of heaven, but their fragrance and beauty is not their final object.*'

There is much blessing and much help in good desires. Sometimes a resolution is made that changes the whole current of life, which, under God, gives enthusiasm and fervour in the fulfilment of great works—'a venture of faith' in a high vocation. All these often come from this kindled affection: '*I can do all things*'; '*I will lay down my life for Thy sake.*' There is great beauty in such

* 'The Resurrection,' p. 190.

desires in the young life, in the first bright stages of the spiritual journey, in the first warm aspirations of the soul for its Lord and for devotion to Him : ‘ *I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.*’

2. Fervour of feeling, however, is not to be overvalued. Its true office must be understood, for in itself it is evanescent like the flower ; but it may be made permanent by obedience and loving sacrifice : ‘ *By their fruits ye shall know them.*’ There is no necessary discouragement in its withdrawal ; it may mark the passing from the earlier to the later stages of the spiritual life, the change from its spring to its summer, from the flower to the fruit. Dulness and dryness are a part of our discipline in bringing forth the fruit of the soul. Sometimes they are even tokens of truer nearness to God : ‘ *They feared as they entered into the cloud*’ ; but, they found, it was to be with Him. And so with yourselves, the later spiritual life will be calmer, more settled, more immovable, raised above the fluctuations of feeling : ‘ *O set me up upon the Rock that is higher than I.*’

3. Notice one great purpose in the decline of fervour. It is intended to place the spiritual life on a higher level, to raise it out of a state of mere spiritual comfort and self-satisfaction that we may live for God, not for ourselves : ‘ *He that loseth his life for My sake, the same shall find it.*’ Beware, at such a time, of temptation to murmuring and growing indifference. Are we inclined to say, ‘ *My flesh and my heart faileth*’ as fervour declines ? Not so ; for then more than ever, then more abidingly and calmly, let us fall back on the blessed truth : ‘ *God is the Strength of my heart and my Portion for ever.*’

Address IX.

THE CONTEMPLATION OF SCRIPTURE.

WE have been considering spiritual fervour as kindled by the Scriptures, its blessings and its dangers. This does not exhaust the scriptural revelation of Christ. Besides 'the burning of heart' (fervour), we read of an opening of the understanding, *that they might understand the Scriptures.*' The mind or understanding by contemplation of the Scriptures, apprehends Christ, no less than the heart by the kindling of the affections and desires. Our present subject, then, is, The Contemplation of Scripture.

Think of our Lord's reproof to the two disciples. Not only did He reprove them for their slowness of heart, but also for their undiscerning mind: 'O void of understanding!' The mind is to exercise its faculties upon the Scriptures; our powers of imagination, reason, discernment are all to be brought to bear on them. '*Search the Scriptures*'; not merely love them, but investigate them: '*The prophets have inquired and searched diligently.*' '*Then opened He their understanding*' for illumination in the mysteries of the Faith. Holy Scripture is given us not for mere speculation or to gratify mental curiosity, but for the discernment of spiritual truth under the guidance of the Divine Spirit in the Church. Spiritual truth is revealed by the Spirit, and is apprehended by the spiritual mind. God has given us a spiritual faculty, so that the mind, illuminated by the Spirit of Christ, both apprehends and receives. '*The Spirit searcheth all things*

—*yea, the deep things of God.*’ The Scriptures therefore are to be contemplated.

Meditation on Holy Scripture is a point of great interest and moment. It is a moral exercise; an exercise of the mind requiring concentration of thought. Hence it is often difficult, unless we are used to self-recollection and self-control.

Aids to meditation may be found in—(1) Regular spiritual reading, the mind being exercised upon what is read. For this latter purpose outlines are better than fuller forms, and as the reflective powers grow we may dispense with outward aids. But (2) Collectedness of mind is necessary to sustain thought: ‘*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law.*’

Consider spiritual illumination. Spiritual things—the truths and mysteries of God—come out more and more clearly as we gaze on them continually in the light of the Spirit—like a beautiful picture, contemplated at first only with a general and vague impression, the study of which unfolds its distinct features, and we apprehend more and more all its beauty and significance. So by keeping the vision of the unseen world before the mind, we counteract the influences of the merely visible: ‘*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*’ Further we must ever bear in mind that Holy Scripture reveals the Person of Christ. This is strikingly brought out in the narrative before us: ‘*The things concerning Himself*’—the great incidents in His Personal Life, the Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Mediation: ‘*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*’ All our meditations should converge towards His Divine Person. He is the great Object of our gaze: ‘*I see the*

Son of Man. ‘*I saw . . . One like unto the Son of Man.*’
‘*I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee.*’

Pray especially to the Holy Ghost for light and illumination. Be regular in your meditations, otherwise the Vision is interrupted. ‘*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law.*’

Address X.

THE EUCHARISTIC REVELATION.

LET us pass on now to that which we may call the final revelation, the last and closing scene of this momentous journey to Emmaus. ‘*He was known of them in Breaking of Bread*’; the manifestation in the Holy Eucharist: This, in some of its many and deeply interesting aspects, is now to occupy our attention. You recollect the narrative; it is not necessary to discuss the question of an actual Eucharist. The circumstances are Eucharistic; the very expression ‘*Breaking of Bread*’ is the Scriptural term for the Holy Eucharist. Let us consider, then, the significant actions throughout, and the wonderful illumination that followed: ‘*Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.*’

It is very interesting to examine and compare with one another the Scriptural and the Eucharistic revelations—Scripture kindling the desire for Christ, the Eucharist satisfying that desire: ‘*My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before*

the presence of God? ‘*With Thee is the well of life, and in Thy light shall we see light.*’

But here again, as in the Scriptural revelation, the Person of Christ is the great idea. In the Eucharist it is the Person of Christ that is manifested: ‘*He was known of them in Breaking of Bread.*’ His own precious words of promise are: ‘*I will come to you.*’ ‘*The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me.*’ ‘*I am with you alway.*’

This is the unspeakable blessedness of the Holy Eucharist—the Personal Presence of our Lord. The eyes of the soul are opened, and we know Him; we know that it is He Himself; not a gift merely or a joy or a blessing, but our Lord Himself: ‘*I am the Living Bread.*’ ‘*It is I Myself.*’

Such is our subject—The Eucharistic Revelation of the Person of Christ. Let us dwell on it in three aspects: 1. The Manifestation of the Person of Christ; 2. The Spiritual Character of the Vision; 3. The Abiding Nature of the Presence; and as we pause for the present to dwell on this subject let us notice one special point—Our Approaches to His Person in the Holy Eucharist.

1. There is the Penitential Attitude of the soul. One attitude of the soul in approaching Him is the sense of sin in drawing near. Like St. Peter, we are at times inclined to cry out: ‘*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*’ And this sense of sin is deepened still more at the thought of our Lord coming to us: ‘*Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof.*’ Cultivate and cherish in your Communion this sense of unworthiness. Some of the most blessed Communion have been made in this frame of mind; as we come, not de-

manding joy and comfort and blessing, but throwing ourselves as penitents and sinners at our Lord's feet that He may 'do with us *what seemeth Him good*'; worthy of nothing, but clinging to His mercy: '*Thy sins are forgiven thee*'; '*Go in peace*'; '*I will come and heal him*'; '*A broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise.*'

2. Another attitude in our approach to Christ is the Trustful Attitude. This is very pleasing to Him. He values our confidence and our trust in His love and goodness when we come to Him in the Holy Communion. Do your utmost to guard against distrust, over-anxiety, and scruple, insisting, as it were, on the realisation of your own wishes as to the effects of Communion instead of on His. Leave all to Him: '*Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him*'; '*Though it tarry, wait.*' We ourselves are too much in a hurry. He waits till '*the hour is come*'; He waits, '*that He may be gracious.*'

3. There is yet another attitude—the Thankful Attitude. This is very important, but very often forgotten in Holy Communion. The very word 'Eucharist' means and implies praise and thanksgiving. Remember our Lord's reward of thankfulness: '*There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger,*' etc. Let us forget ourselves and our sins and think more of His mercies, His goodness, His glory, and of seeking to glorify Him, and not of merely hoping to be ourselves comforted. Let our Communion be true Eucharists of praise and thanksgiving. In our 'intentions' at Holy Communion let us mingle more thanksgiving, and think more of the importance of thanksgiving *after* Communion, avoiding hurry and formality, remembering that thankfulness is very close to humility: '*So will I go to Thine altar, that I may shew*

the voice of thanksgiving ; ‘ *Thou shalt shew me the path of life ; in Thy Presence is the fulness of joy.*’

Address XI.

THE SPIRITUAL VISION OF THE EUCHARIST.

LET us proceed to the second aspect of our subject—The Spiritual Character of the Vision.

How much is involved in the words, ‘ *He vanished out of their sight* ’ ! There is at first, as we read it, a sense of disappointment ; yet, in its deeper meaning, how significant ! He withdrew outwardly that He might be apprehended inwardly—by faith, not by sight.

The vision of Christ henceforth is spiritual. This is the fulfilment of our Lord’s teaching : to St. Mary Magdalene : ‘ *Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended* ’ ; to the Apostles (on the night of the Institution) ; ‘ *the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me* ’ ; and of the inward manifestation by the Spirit : ‘ *Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world ?* ’ Our Lord’s answer to this question is : ‘ *If a man love Me, he will keep My words. . . . And We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.*’

Let us for a moment or two consider the interpretation given by St. Augustine of this passage (‘ *He vanished,*’ etc.) : ‘ *After they had apprehended by faith, then in body He departed from them. This is the reason—that faith might be built up thereby.*’ And again speaking of the outward absence and the Spiritual Presence in the Holy Eucharist, he says : ‘ *The absence of our*

Lord is not absence. Have faith, and He Whom Thou seest not is with thee.'

Let us gather up our thoughts and fix upon one point for our present meditation—The Vision or Apprehension of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

1. This apprehension is not emotional; *that* is more the character of the stirrings of heart by Scriptural revelations. The vision of the Eucharist is deeper. As it has been well observed by Isaac Williams, it 'penetrates beneath the senses and emotions to the deeper regions of the spirit.' A Divine life is imparted, not earthly or sentient: deeper, more calm, more mysterious, unruffled by the agitations that stir the surface of our being. 'It happens on some certain occasions that we possess God without knowing Him; and that when we do know Him we lose the sensible enjoyment of Him' (Quesnel).

Let us draw this out, and take a caution against always expecting in our Communion sensible consolation and human joy: '*My thoughts are not your thoughts.*' It may console us in the absence of human feeling to reflect that we are really unable to contain or to express or to apprehend the Divine Vision; '*Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house*' of my heart; '*Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.*'

2. But there is often an after perception of the Presence. This is a feature of Eucharistic life often noticed. No perception at the time, but afterwards a realisation of some great blessing and its powers. 'We have been with Jesus, He has been with us: and we knew it not.' '*They feared as they entered into the cloud.*' How truly in the morning of some quiet Eucharist has Jesus '*stood upon the shore*' of

this troubled human heart and we '*knew not that it was Jesus!*' Some after event or incident or experience has revealed the Presence at the time unrealised; and we have said to one another, or to our own heart: '*It is the Lord,*' as Dr. Newman beautifully says in one of his sermons: an 'after-fragrance or sweetness breathes from His garments': '*A smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*' '*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.*'

3. Our Lord has told us the condition of the realisation of this Spiritual Vision. The question was asked on the night of the Institution: '*Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us and not unto the world?*' How wilt Thou impart this Spiritual Vision? The answer is: '*If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.*' A loving obedience is the condition; not stirred feelings, or lively impressions, or human fervour, but the calm obedience of love; the being cleansed from every secret sin, the casting out of self, the love of others, the submission to the Divine Will—this is our preparation.

Then the Divine Presence will dwell within us in all the mystery and stillness and power of that mighty Indwelling: '*We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.*'

Address XII.

THE ABIDING PRESENCE.

WE now reach the final address of our Retreat. Closely and intimately connected with the 'Spiritual Vision' is the 'Abiding Presence' of our Lord, summing up as it does all the blessings and graces of the Holy Eucharist: '*He went in to tarry with them.*' How much beyond the primary meaning is suggested by the words, '*He went in to tarry with them,*' as in those others, '*He vanished out of their sight*'! For though, as an earthly Guest, and in the sphere of sight, He departed, in His Spiritual Manhood and in the sphere of faith He will tarry with them always.

And as, in reference to the Spiritual Vision, He says, '*The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me,*' so, too, in respect of the Abiding Presence, summing up all the promises of His blessings to the Church before He ascended into heaven, and giving to His disciples His last great assurance of unfailing love—that which should be the stay of their hearts in all that was before them, and the earnest of their final victory—He says: '*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*'

Let us take this for the subject of our closing meditation. The words have an especial fitness for our assurance and comfort as we look forward into the future, that He Who has been with us here will be with us '*always*' (*all the days*, R.V., margin), through all the varied scenes of our work and our trial, even to the end.

Notice especially the nature of this Presence. The

Presence in the Holy Eucharist is the Presence of the Divine Manhood. Our Lord is present as the Son of Man as well as the Son of God. As the Divine Son of Man, '*I am with you alway.*' So in Eucharistic terms: '*This is My Body,*' '*This is My Blood.*' Our minds are taken back to His true Humanity, the Humanity joined inseparably with the Godhead: '*The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.*' It is the Flesh and it is the Blood of the Son of Man in the Blessed Sacrament, spiritual and glorified and incorruptible, the Divine Manhood: '*The Word was made Flesh,*' yet '*the Word is God.*' '*Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.*'

Think of the sympathy of the Human Presence—'*I see the Son of Man*'—and have boldness and comfort in approaching Him. We can hide ourselves in His Heart: '*We have not an High Priest Which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*'

So we conclude our Retreat dwelling on the Abiding Presence, gazing upon Him even when we return again from the mountain of Retreat to the level plain of our life and work.

Let us sum up with one or two concluding thoughts.

I. The Holy Eucharist is the pledge of our abiding union with our Lord. His Presence is with us '*alway,*' (*all the days*), even to the end. *All the days*, the cloudy and dark days as well as the bright. Our eyes may be holden; our hearts sad; Christ may be hidden by the cloud of sin in us, or by the fury of Satan; yet, none the less, is He with us *all the days*: '*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you.*'

This is an especial comfort when we see no tokens of

His Presence. He is not gone. He makes as though He would go, but He does not go; He is watching, waiting, loving, keeping, in the *clouds and darkness*, but there He is, *in the cloud and in the darkness*.

II. Let there be no withdrawal from Communion because of darkness. Only sin should keep us away. The Blessed Sacrament is an assurance; we shall know that we have been with Him. Have we not often felt this in the darkest hour?—‘*I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.*’ Constrain Him, and He will abide. His question comes to us, ‘*Why are ye troubled?*’ His assurance follows, ‘*It is I Myself.*’

III. Let us once more be on our guard against weak and distrustful fears—a special danger to some minds. Listen to our Lord’s loving reproof: ‘*Why are ye fearful?*’ Let us make a resolution of trust and confidence. The Holy Eucharist raises us above self—out of the weak, fitful, sentient, fluctuating nature, which is ourself: ‘*O set me up upon the Rock that is higher than I.*’

IV. Let us think of our last Communion. We look on. What shall be the conditions and circumstances of that last Eucharist on earth? It is well sometimes to think of this—our introduction to the nearer Presence within the Veil, the Eucharist of Paradise. God grant to us that unspeakable joy—‘*Their eyes were opened, and they knew him*’:—the recognition of Him Whom here we have worshipped in mystery and sacrament; Whom ‘*Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to Face.*’ There will also be the awe of that introduction. Even then there may be for awhile *clouds and darkness*. We must not expect to be altogether free from this: ‘*They feared as they entered into the cloud.*’ It is the shadow of His Presence, solemn and awful, but the fear will be sweetened by

a sense of His mercy, '*for with the Lord there is mercy.*'

Then at last will come the unveiling of all mysteries, the solution of perplexities and disappointments, the unfolding of God's purpose in all that has been so dark and mysterious here on earth. The joy of the Vision of His Countenance at the last! '*We shall see Him as He is*'; '*the King in His Beauty*,' when we have come to the land that now seems '*very far off*'; and '*When I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.*'



Notes of Addresses
given at a Community Retreat at
Clewer, 1891.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS: THE CONSECRATED LIFE.

AGAIN, at the bidding of the Lord, and called by His Spirit, we enter into Retreat. For a Retreat presents to us in one special form the great invitation of our Lord to human souls: '*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*' What is the purpose of this special call to each one, and how shall we obey it? This seems to be our great question as we gather together to-night. And there are several ways in which we may seek an answer to it.

1. There is the consciousness of the Divine call in Retreat. This must be sustained throughout. It is very helpful. In all difficulties, doubts, perplexities, sadness, distraction, coldness, hardness, disappointment, rest upon the assurance: *Thou* hast called me into this Retreat; *Thou* wilt be with me: '*Here also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.*'

2. The special message to the soul. There is a purpose in this Retreat for each one. What, Lord, wilt Thou speak unto *me*? A Retreat is a season of a special inter-

view with our Lord: '*There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee.*' And in Retreat His Voice may be heard in varied tones. There is the Voice of reproof: '*I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done*'; or the Voice of warning: '*Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown*'; or the Voice of consolation: '*Fear not, for I am with thee*'; or the Voice of guidance: '*I will teach you the good and the right way*'; or the Voice of peace: '*I will give you rest, Peace be unto you.*' Let us make answer: '*Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.*'

3. The abiding fruit of a Retreat. Beware only of impressions, and desires, and stirred feelings. Carry forward the message into the future by some definite resolution: '*The word of the Lord endureth for ever.*' The resolution makes the Divine message permanent in the life: '*I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*'

The special subject I propose to consider in this Retreat is:—The Consecrated Life of the Religious, its Duties and Difficulties, and its Tests of Faithfulness. It is helpful for you to pass thus in review the conditions of your Vocation, to remind yourselves of its special blessings and responsibilities, to kindle fresh ardour for ever-increasing faithfulness to your Lord, Who has called you to Himself and united you in such close union with Himself. During the earlier days of Retreat the Duties and Difficulties of the Consecrated Life will occupy our attention, and on the last two days the Tests of the Consecrated Life. '*I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go.*' '*He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool.*' May the Holy Ghost the Comforter abide with us in these sacred days of our Retreat! May He teach us all things,

and bring all things to our remembrance whatsoever our Lord would say to us, and may He shed abroad His peace in all our hearts!

Address I.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE: ITS DUTIES AND DIFFICULTIES.

LET us consider the first or earliest stage of the Consecrated Life, its earliest impulse—the Divine Vocation: ‘*The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*’ Your Vocation is not merely an event of the past. Its influence flows on, and extends, and shapes the whole of the Consecrated Life to the end. It lives on as a distinct influence in the Life of the called. In this meditation, dear Sisters, reflect awhile upon your own call to the Consecrated Life, its tokens and conditions. We may take for special guidance on this point the vocation of Mary of Bethany. We will notice two points: (1) The sitting still, or waiting: ‘*Mary sat still in the house.*’ (2) The Master’s summons: ‘*The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*’

I. What an important phase in the Religious Life does this represent,—the time of waiting or suspense before the call comes,—while considering whether God is really calling us to the Religious Life! How important is this time of probation! There are—

(a) Outward obstacles to be overcome, putting our patience, our courage, our submission, to the test: ‘*Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of?*’

(b) The inward misgivings: varying moods of doubt, fear, hope, etc., fluctuations of feeling, and even of conviction. The time of suspense or waiting is given us to

face and meet and deal with these inward obstacles :
 ‘*Though I am sometime afraid, yet put I my trust in Thee.*’

(c) This waiting time proves the perfectness of our self-surrender where there is not only readiness to obey the call itself, but to submit ourselves wholly to the Master’s will as regards the time and the way and the form of our call : ‘*Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it unto me according to thy word.*’

(d) Once more : The influence of this temper of mind, this temper of waiting trust, tells on all the after-life. It is just these habits of patience, of courage, of entire self-surrender, and the perfect subdual of self-will, which in the after-life constitute and prove the reality of our Vocation. So was it also with the Blessed Virgin Mary ; her first response to the Divine call, ‘*Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it unto me according to thy word,*’ not only marking her willingness to obey the call at first, but it expressed, as her Consecrated Life developed, the abiding and predominant characteristic of that Life—submission to the Divine Will. Is not this one attitude, one aspect, of all our Religious Life, as well as its initial condition ?

II. The Master’s summons : ‘*The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him.*’

(a) There was no delay on the part of Mary. There is a difference between suspense and delay. Suspense and waiting is an attitude of the Religious Life, but not delay : ‘*She arose quickly, and came.*’

(b) The remembrance of this first summons should abide through all the after-life. And there is great comfort and strength in the remembrance. There are seasons in the experience of the Religious Life of doubt, distress, and misgiving, when we may fall back on the remembrance of

that Call. He Who called will never leave us nor forsake us. So the Blessed Virgin Mary through all her life '*kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart*'—all the mysteries of the Annunciation,—the first call to her high destiny,—and this sustained her to the end, even in the darkest hours, even when the sword pierced through her soul.

(c) Notice further the prompt obedience of Mary of Bethany: '*She arose quickly*'—a feature of the whole life, as well as of the day of Vocation. Whatever our Lord may call us to now and in the future: '*Draw me, we will run after Thee.*' '*Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.*'

And as the Voice and the Call echoes on through the whole of the Consecrated Life, and makes ever fresh and fresh demands upon our obedience, and our submission, and our perfect trust, the words of the Spouse in the Canticles will express the fulness of our assurance and joy: '*I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go.*'

Address II.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE: ITS DUTIES AND DIFFICULTIES

(continued).

WE pass on to a second point—the Life, which is to correspond with the Vocation. The 'Vocation,' the Master's Call to us: '*The Master is come, and calleth for thee*'; the 'Life,' the Master's Life in us: '*Because I live, ye shall live also.*'

I. All true Christian life is the participation of the Life of Christ in us. In its higher form—as in the Religious Life, by a closer union with the Lord—that

Life is to be reproduced more wholly. The outward aspect of the Religious Life is represented by the three vows of Obedience, Poverty, Chastity. These are not arbitrary conditions, but distinct features of the Human Life of our Lord. (a) Obedience: He '*learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*' (b) Poverty: '*Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor.*' (c) Chastity: '*A Lamb without blemish and without spot.*'

II. But the real essence of the Religious Life lies in the inward spirit, of which the outward life is the manifestation. The outward form is fixed, the three vows accepted; but the outward conditions may exist without the corresponding spirit. This spirit does not come necessarily with the outward acceptance of the Life; indeed, it has to a great extent to be formed in us, and to grow in us, and to be made more and more perfect in the sphere of the Consecrated Life as that Life develops. Consider, then, the three inner characteristics, without which there can be no true Religious Life in us:

(a) The *spirit* of obedience, the ready submission of the will to the calls and duties of each day; to suffering and the Cross.

(b) The *spirit* of poverty, the renunciation of self: '*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*' The natural self is brought with us into the Life; natural faults and tendencies are sometimes even accentuated and made more prominent through the contrast with the outward renunciation of self. Community Life has its blessings and its trials. Self sometimes within the narrow limits of a Religious House is more concentrated. Some have found the battle with self harder here than in the world. But yet in this very difficulty lies the blessing and power of Community Life. The greater need for

the exercise of self-subdual leads to and issues in a more perfect victory over self: *'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne: even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His Throne.'*

(c) The spirit of chastity, the detachment from creatures; the control of excessive affections: *'We have forsaken all, and followed Thee.'* *'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.'*

III. One further point in connection with the Life—its Divine Sustenance: *'Because I live, ye shall live also.'* *'He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.'* It is interesting to notice three channels of communication of the Divine Life, each connecting itself in a measure with one or other of those three characteristics of the Life on which we have been dwelling:

(a) Personal Devotion connected with Obedience. Carelessness in devotion undermines obedience: *'Abide in Me, and I in you.'*

(b) Sustained Meditation connected with Poverty. We must learn to forget ourselves, and to contemplate our Lord in His perfect renunciation of Self, otherwise the pattern of that Life will grow indistinct, and it will have less and less influence on our own life: *'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'*

(c) Devout Communion connected with Chastity. How necessary is careful preparation for the reception of the spotless Body and Blood of the Lord, both with regard to the form of preparation and the having a fixed time for it!—purifying the heart carefully from all special sin and fault, removing all obstacles to His indwelling Presence: *'We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.'* I *'will manifest Myself to him.'* So the life within will be more

and more His Life in you, and each will be able to say, concerning her own Consecrated Life: *'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'*

Address III.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE: ITS WORK.

WE have considered the Consecrated Life in its threefold aspect—the Life that is instinct with the Spirit of Obedience, of Poverty, of Chastity. One caution is necessary: the outward consecration will not of itself make the inward life holy. That is a work of time. We must guard against a special and a subtle snare of Satan, that our life is necessarily holy because we are outwardly separated from the world. All experience warns us to the contrary. Remember Israel, the chosen of God, the holy people, at last cast out.

We pass on now to consider the Work. As the Life is to correspond with the Vocation, so the Work is to prove the Life of the Religious. Here, again, as in the Life, so in the Work, we trace the great principles, the true characteristics, in the work of our Blessed Lord. There are three principles of the Work, corresponding with the three conditions (Obedience, Poverty, Chastity) of the Life: (1) Conformity with the Will of God; (2) Forgetfulness or Subdual of Self; (3) Perfect Faithfulness. Let us dwell on these three great principles in our present meditation.

I. The Will of God as ordering the Work of a Religious. Our Blessed Lord, speaking of His work for God, empha-

sises this: '*My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.*'

(a) The work was not His own, but the Father's.

(b) The work was not self-chosen; He was called, was sent to do it.

(c) The motive of the work lay in the desire to act in perfect obedience to the Father's Will: '*My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me.*' We have to direct our work on religious principles, and are not only to do good work, but our appointed work—the work God has given us to do—recognising in the rules of the Religious Order the Divine calling and appointment to that work, finding in that work the means of responding to the Will of God. The Will of God is to be stamped on all true Religious Work. We are called and sent to that work, whatever it be—congenial or uncongenial, high or low. Are we doing it gladly?

II. Self-effacement in our own work. Trace and follow up this great principle in our Lord's redeeming work: '*He made Himself of no reputation.*'

(a) How are we avoiding natural sensitiveness, jealousies at interference, eagerness for notice, pain at non-appreciation? Think of our Lord's words: '*I seek not Mine Own glory.*'

(b) While natural gifts must be consecrated in spiritual work, we must learn to distrust our own powers, abilities, tact, gifts, etc. Spiritual work demands spiritual powers: '*Not I, but Christ liveth in me.*'

(c) Have we joy in the success of others? Try to cultivate the spirit of your own St. John Baptist:* '*He must increase, but I must decrease.*' Put self into the back-

* The Community House at Clewer is dedicated to St. John Baptist.

ground. Our one consideration must be : Does the Lord's work advance? Is His Name magnified? '*Not my will, but Thine be done.*'

III. Perfect faithfulness to Him Who hath called us. All our work must be *thorough* and complete. We must try, as it were, to give finishing touches, that the work may be perfect, so as '*to finish His work.*' This involves attention to little details—the little acts that never meet the human eye, the little sufferings borne in secret, the secret motives which underlie all our work : '*Faithful in that which is least*' as well as '*in much.*' Perfect faithfulness, spotless loyalty to Him is what He expects in us.

In conclusion, so may you liken your work to His, drawing ever into closer union with Him, finding more and more the union of a fully reciprocated love and perfect confidence and oneness of heart and spirit with the Heavenly Bridegroom : '*My Beloved is Mine, and I am His.*' The day of toil will end, the eventide will one day come, and we shall work no more ; then shall He call us to our rest with Him. '*Let us,*' says St. Paul, '*labour therefore to enter into that rest*'—the rest that remaineth '*to the people of God.*'

Address IV.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE : ITS WORSHIP.

WE pass on now from the consideration of the Work of the Consecrated Life to its Worship. Here we enter the inner precincts of the Consecrated Life ; here we hope to find ourselves in union with our Lord, and to understand something of the mystery of our spiritual fellowship with Him. From the scene of outward life and work we pass

to the Cloister, to the Choir, and to the Altar. Worship is indeed the very essence of the Religious Life, the source of all its energies, its perennial spring, its '*well of Living Water*,' fertilising all the Life, invigorating, refreshing, calming it. And so from toil and trouble and disappointment and our manifold distractions we come back again and again to the Sanctuary and to the Altar, to drink in at the Fountain of Life *Living Water*—the Water of Life that gladdens the City of God, and brings renewed freshness and vigour and joy into each heart, into each consecrated shrine and tabernacle of the Most High: '*All my fresh springs shall be in Thee.*' As the Work of the Religious proves the Life, so we may certainly say the Worship animates the Work. The subject of our meditation, then, is Worship in the Consecrated Life.

Here, again, we fall back on the great Example and Pattern of all worship—our Lord Himself. As in the Religious Life, so in our Lord's Life we see obedience, poverty, and chastity; as in Religious work so in our Lord's work we see also submission to the Will of God, self-effacement, perfect faithfulness. So, once more in Religious Worship, our Lord, the True Pattern and Archetype, has left '*an example, that ye should follow His steps.*' Let us dwell upon three branches or aspects of worship: (1) Worship in secret; (2) Worship in Choir; (3) Worship at the Altar.

I. Worship in secret. (a) Think of our Lord's frequent withdrawal to the 'mountain' or to the 'solitary place' for prayer. So should we withdraw ourselves from distractions, interruptions, outward interests to commune in secret with God: '*Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father Which is in secret.*' The difficulty in busy days of work is to find the opportunity for

this secret time with God. Do not despise short times if this is all you can manage. Make it a rule to leave off what you are engaged in to go and pray: '*He departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*' Secret worship invigorates and spiritualises all our worship: '*All my fresh springs shall be in Thee*'; '*He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*'

(b) Secret worship at special times. Our Lord, in the great crises of His Life—*e.g.*, before choosing the Twelve Apostles—'*spent the whole night in prayer.*' So with us. Before entering on any important work—Postulancy, the Novitiate, Profession; in any special perplexity; before any new work; while contemplating any decision for yourselves or others—seek counsel in prayer: '*Thy Face, Lord, will I seek.*'

(c) Secret worship is the stay and strength of the soul. It was so with our Blessed Lord: '*I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*' From this worship we gain the secret sustainings of the soul, new inspirations for work, the power to trust and to wait patiently; it brings to the soul '*the peace of God which passeth all understanding*': '*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee*'; '*Abide in Me, and I in you.*'

II. Worship in Choir. Here our great aim and our chief difficulty is constantly to maintain its spirituality. Our Lord is our guide here also, for we can trace His Sacred Footsteps in the Temple. How earnestly He warns against a merely mechanical worship or routine, against drawing near with the lips while the heart is far from God: '*My House shall be called the House of Prayer*'; '*God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*' Notice here the danger of repetition. This is a real difficulty; words are apt to

lose their meaning, and our worship becomes formal. How can we avoid this?

(a) It is a good plan to fix the mind on some distinct portion of the Office, or on some special thought.

(b) Let your approach to the Choir ever be reverent and recollected, setting aside at once the interests, the special work when the bell summons you to Chapel.

(c) Use ejaculatory prayer on passing from the outer life to the Sanctuary: '*Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*' The spiritual meaning of this is: 'Leave behind thee the cares, the interests thou hast been carrying about in thy life and work, and so enter calmly on the holy ground.'

(d) Cultivate habitual calmness of mind. This *must* be a habit. You cannot put on and take off calmness like a garment. It is impossible to stay the feelings at the moment and become all at once undistracted. It may be acquired in two ways: (1) By the daily effort to spiritualise your worship, and make it as calm and as earnest as you can, fixing the mind and heart; (2) and especially by growing in the habits of self-control and self-restraint; gaining power over outward things; learning to discipline your words, your feelings, your impulses day by day in ordinary life. Then when you come into Choir your thoughts will be more under control, more recollected, because the whole life, with all its thoughts and feelings, has been brought into subjection to the Will of God: '*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.*'

Think, then, of these two forms of worship; seek to bring your worship more into harmony with the mind of our Blessed Lord, that even here, in the earthly Sanctuary, you may be learning, in some faint measure, to copy the heavenly worship, the worship of the Choirs of the Eternal

Temple, '*who rest not day and night*' from their calm, unbroken, undistracted worship: '*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come.*'

Address V.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE: ITS WORSHIP (*continued*).

WE continue the subject of our previous meditation, 'The Consecrated Life: its Worship.' We have already considered the subjects of Worship in secret, and Worship in Choir. We pass on now to Worship at the Altar. Here we touch the very centre of all worship. The Holy Altar is the point of contact with the unseen world, the threshold of heaven, the mysterious Throne of the Supernatural Presence of the Lord. Dwell for a little on this. Nor are we left without help from our Blessed Lord's Example; and we find it in the great prayer of Oblation and Consecration before He offered Himself on the altar of the Cross (St. John xvii.). This most sublime prayer reveals the meaning and power of all Sacramental worship. Mark three points: (1) Self-consecration: '*I sanctify (or consecrate) myself.*' So in Holy Communion there must ever be the twofold preparation: (*a*) Special purification; (*b*) entire dedication of the will. The want of these makes our Communions fruitless. In Retreat make each Communion an act of renewed self-consecration: '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*' (2) Intercession: '*I pray for them.*' Think of your own intercessions at the Altar. They should be carefully prepared, not left to the moment. Write down names of those for whom and objects on behalf of which you would intercede: '*I pray for them*'; '*I pray*

for the Church in all time'; 'I pray that the world may believe.' And still '*He ever liveth to make intercession for them,*' bidding us unite our intercession with His. (3) The blessing of the Indwelling Presence. This is the special Sacrament of His Presence: '*I in them, and Thou in Me.*' '*I will come to you.*' '*We will come and make Our abode with him.*' '*I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.*'

The great purpose and blessedness of His Indwelling Life is the communication of Himself—our Lord living, working, suffering in us, '*making His abode*' in us. He lives and dwells in us, transforming us into His likeness (though we know it not), making us partakers of the Divine Nature, changing us into His Image. So the consummation of worship at the Altar is perfect renewal in His likeness, wrought little by little in secret, manifested at last: '*We shall be like Him : for we shall see Him as He is.*' Or, in the words of His prayer in St. John xvii. : '*Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory.*' Here will be the satisfaction of all our aspirations: '*When I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.*'

Address VI.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE : A LIFE OF SACRIFICE.

So far we have touched on the Vocation, the Life, the Work, the Worship of the Consecrated Life of the Religious. One aspect of that Life remains, which pervades, completes, and is the climax of it all ; it is a Life of Sacrifice. We

see this in our Blessed Lord Himself. His Life of perfect obedience, poverty, and chastity was consummated by the Sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. So the Consecrated Life, in all its stages, must run up into and be perfected by the sacrifice of ourselves. We see it again in the Blessed Virgin Mary; her call, her life, her work, her worship is crowned by her self-sacrifice, as she shared mysteriously in the sufferings and Sacrifice of the Incarnate Son: '*Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.*'

Let us dwell on this aspect of the Consecrated Life: its Sacrifice.

I. The Willingness of the Sacrifice. This is the great feature in our Lord's Sacrifice from the very first. '*In the volume of the book it is written of Me that I should fulfil Thy will, O My God; I am content to do it.*' So, too, the Blessed Virgin: '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*' What are the marks of this willingness? How are you to recognise it in yourselves? (a) By the glad acceptance of each appointed work; not in a general submission, but gladly accepting each work that is given you to do. (b) By the cheerfulness with which you bear outward sufferings, weakness, disappointment in work, or inward struggles with yourselves: '*Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.*' God looks for cheerfulness of spirit. In the Consecrated Life there must be no discontent, nothing gloomy or morbid, no brooding self-consciousness in its acts of obedience: '*The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy.*' (c) By willingness to respond at once to daily acts of self-renunciation, not only in those which are seen and receive their reward in the praise of men, but in the little secret acts, the giving up your own choice or your own part in the work to others; not only saying nothing about your disappointments, loneli-

ness, and want of sympathy, but not even allowing the mind to dwell on them. The joy of these sacrifices flows into the soul in a deepening conformity with God's will : *'that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.'*

II. The Spiritual Cross, or Inward Sacrifice. Our Lord's spiritual anguish was more severe than the anguish of His Body. So with us ; we must expect that the inward sacrifice will be more intense. As with the Blessed Virgin Mary : *'A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.'*

This form of sacrifice may be found in : (a) The burden of sin. Our Lord bore the great burden of our sins : *'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'* So, again, with us : the consciousness of sin, our many falls, their hatefulness—all become a burden *'grievous to be borne'* as we draw nearer to God. Or, again, you here, in your penitentiary work, are privileged to bear with Him the burden of the sins of others ; and in this way He grants you a share in the work of Sacrifice, the Sacrifice, remember, of Him Who *'bore the sins of many.'* (b) Or in secret loneliness. Even in Community Life, as in a crowd, the heart may be alone : companionship may be uncongenial, sympathy that you long for may be withheld. There are depths of our spirit, which no one can fathom, where we must be alone. Yet He is with us, and shares it with us, He Who alone knows the deepest meaning of loneliness : Ye *'shall leave Me alone : yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.'* (c) Or in a mysterious feeling of heart, when the weakness of the body reacts upon the soul and spirit. So our Blessed Lord, His flesh weighing down His spirit, cried : *'If it be possible, let this Cup pass from Me.'* If called to do so, try patiently to share His desolation : *'My flesh and my heart faileth ; but God is the Strength of my heart, and my*

portion for ever.' By means of these three aspects of the Spiritual Cross you may be made like unto our Blessed Lord, and may even enter, in a measure, into the mystery of His Spiritual anguish.

III. One closing thought. The Divine Sustaining suggested by these words: '*God is the Strength of my heart.*' God will sustain us, whatever be the sacrifice to which He calls us. As with the Blessed Virgin in her hour of self-sacrifice at the Cross, what power and blessing was found in His sustaining word: '*Woman, behold thy Son!*' Or in the case of our Lord Himself: '*Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*' Or in the last moment of His awful Passion: '*Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit.*' So as each one obeys His call, and yields herself to the appointed sacrifice, His Voice will ever echo in the soul: '*Fear not, for I am with thee.*' '*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*' Through all, as the darkness deepens, in every sinking of heart, will be found a Divine sustenance for the wholly surrendered soul: '*The Eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms.*'

Address VII.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE : TESTS OF FAITHFULNESS.

Endurance of Temptation.

HITHERTO, in Retreat, our thoughts have rested chiefly on the duties and difficulties of the Consecrated Life. We will turn now from these to view the Religious Life from another standpoint, and to ask ourselves: Have we been faithful, are we faithful, to the Life to which we are con-

secrated? Amid all its varying and often self-sacrificing calls, in spite of all its difficulties, are you true to it, or, rather, to Him, the Lord and Bridegroom of your souls, to Whom you are knit in the deepest and closest ties of spiritual union, having laid at His Feet every power, every desire, every affection of your whole being? ‘*My Beloved is mine, and I am His.*’ In other words, I would have you consider, in the latter half of the Retreat, some of the tests of your faithfulness, whether indeed ‘*the marks of the Lord Jesus*’ are upon you, whether you bear them in your body as well as in your spirit. The first test shall be ‘Faithfulness under the Stress of Temptation.’ Remember our Lord’s unswerving faithfulness when tempted—‘*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*’ Temptation is like fire; and we are told ‘*the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.*’

Temptation will probably take one of three forms: (1) Doubts as to the reality of your Vocation. Real obstacles, Providential hindrances, for the most part, are clear; they can scarcely be mistaken. But there are, besides, the harassings and suggestions of Satan, which come out in the disappointments of the Life, or the weakness of the flesh, or the strange backslidings of the heart. You must wrestle with, and triumph over, these, and remain loyal to your Lord through all, following ‘*the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*’ Trust in His unfailling guidance and support: ‘*I am with thee, and will keep thee.*’ ‘*Thou hast holden me by my right hand.*’ He is only proving you, training and strengthening you by temptation, and giving you an opportunity of binding yourselves closer to Him. Therefore, ‘*commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.*’

Another subtle form of temptation is (2) To rest in the outward consecration of the Life, its outward services and duties, and let them take the place of the inward personal love of the Lord. Hence the interior life does not keep pace, is never in correspondence with the exterior—*e.g.*, old faults and sins of the old life remain, after the outward life has been consecrated, taking other forms, but yet the same sins. Or again, some love of the creature, a fancy, or an inordinate desire, some pet work or cherished object, some special affection dominating the inward life, becomes a serious hindrance, and you find yourselves loving ‘*the creature more than the Creator.*’

But the most subtle and most pervading temptations will (3) always be from some form of self-love, and that most hidden, often imperceptible. Ask yourselves two questions in Retreat: (a) Is our Lord really the Centre and Object of all my life and work? or does the life still revolve round my influence, success, popularity, my own will, my love of praise—in a word, round self? (b) Is there any one strong inward feeling, impulse, inclination, tendency which is always drawing me in the direction of self, concentrating round it all my efforts and thoughts, away from perfect faithfulness to our Lord? One strong natural tendency, not held in subjection, may mar the whole of the Consecrated Life: ‘*Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*’

You cannot escape from temptation, but you must not be afraid of it. It is to try, test, strengthen you: ‘*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.*’

Address VIII.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE: TESTS OF FAITHFULNESS
(*continued*).

The Vow of Poverty.

IN our last meditation we were considering a test of sincerity in faithfulness under stress of temptation. We pass on now to the consideration of another test—Faithfulness to the Vow of Poverty. For even when we have renounced all things outwardly, we have still to be asking ourselves continually: ‘Is the spirit within faithful to the outward vow?’ The true test will be found not so much in the outward renunciation, as in the true exercise within of *the spirit of poverty*: ‘*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*’

Here let me suggest a few questions for self-examination on this point—the spirit of poverty: (1) Is the heart becoming more and more detached from the things it has left, the concerns and interests of the outer life? (2) Again, are you careful lest other things are taking possession of your hearts, in the place of those you have renounced, engrossing your desires and affections, and so robbing you of the true spirit of poverty within? (3) Once more, while you have given up all rights of property, are you clinging to other rights, thus bringing back into the spirit the love of worldly goods and possessions? We may now and again descry the malice of the devil against the purposes of the Religious Life in subtle effort to mar and frustrate those purposes. ‘O Lord Jesus Christ, Who for our sake didst become poor and madest Thyself of no reputation: make us poor

according to Thy Poverty, that we may be rich in all the riches of Thy lowliness and love !'

In answering such questions of self-examination, glance at some forms of danger which may especially beset you.

1. One danger (pointed out by spiritual writers) is the allowing the affections to be set on trifles. There is often a tendency, when all outward things have been renounced, to cleave to little things, within the circle of the Religious Life. It has been said that : 'The inclinations are sometimes more violently bent upon these trifles than they were before upon the riches in the world'—*e.g.*, we notice a passing slight, or a mark of favour, or the reverse ; a detail of work assigned to or taken from us ; casual precedence of others to us, etc. ; by dwelling with pleasure on, or brooding over these, as the case may be, poverty of spirit is marred and even lost. St. Mark the Abbot (see Rodriguez, vol. iii., pp. 147, 148), in a colloquy, speaks thus to himself : 'You tell me, my soul, that we do not heap up riches. Though we heap up neither gold nor silver, yet we pick up many trifles, to which we tie our affections.' By the spirit of these attachments we fall back from inward poverty. 'Lord, make us poor in spirit : that the kingdom of heaven may be ours.'

2. Another danger to the spirit of poverty to which Community Life is specially liable is found in the excessive tenacity of personal rights. Examine yourselves here also. Do you yield at times to undue resentment of any supposed interference ? Rules and principles of due order are to be observed. But great care is needed lest this observance becomes merely a personal feeling about your own rights. The claims of self may so easily become greater than the claims of our Lord. You must ever be

falling back on His example, Who ‘*made Himself of no reputation.*’

3. Lastly, consider the teaching of our Blessed Lord as to the true character of poverty and self-renunciation. St. Jerome commenting on the words, ‘*Behold, we have left all and followed Thee,*’ points to our Lord’s answer: ‘*Ye who have followed Me . . . shall inherit everlasting life.*’ The reward will not follow upon the outward renunciation of all things, but upon the taking up of the Cross in the Spirit and Mind of Christ our Lord; in the sacrifice of personal feeling, of personal rights, of personal claims, that we may indeed renounce self, and follow in all things His blessed example. So shall we be poor, even as He was poor—‘*poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things,*’ for Whom we ‘*have suffered the loss of all things,*’ to this great end that we ‘*may win Christ, and be found in Him.*’

Address IX.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE: TESTS OF FAITHFULNESS (*continued*).

The Vow of Chastity.

WE pass on, further, to another of the three vows, that you may test yourselves concerning it—The Vow of Chastity. This Vow of Chastity is the central Vow of the Religious Life, true Poverty being the foundation and perfect Obedience the final aim of the Life. It has been well said that, in a certain sense, the other vows depend upon it. For it is of little use to deny yourselves riches if you do not chasten and subdue the body; and, further, unless the body be chastened, there can be no perfect obedience or subjection

of the whole nature to God. Hence the great importance of testing your faithfulness here. 'No virtue,' says an ancient writer, 'renders us so like to the Angels as chastity. By its help we live as if we carried no flesh about us, being transformed by it into pure spirits.' St. Paul says: '*Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*' Put, then, this subject before yourselves for self-examination—the grace of chastity. View it in three relations: (1) Its relation to the affections; (2) its relation to the imagination; (3) its relation to the senses.

1. As to the Affections; for true chastity depends to a great extent upon the due regulation of the affections.

(a) Unrestrained affection in the Religious Life is a double evil. It is an act of idolatry against God—'*worshipping the creature more than the Creator*'; and an act of special unfaithfulness towards our Lord as the Bridegroom of your souls, a transference of your affections to another: '*Thou hast left thy first love.*'

(b) There is great need to watch carefully all special affections that tend to excess, and which, unrestrained, would carry us away and overthrow the whole balance of the spiritual life. These make us faithless to the love of our Lord, and so subtly, that we are often unconscious of their real nature or power over us. This inward idolatry, this secret unfaithfulness to our Lord, may be concealed even under cover of love to Him. We think we are loving Him, and we are really loving others and gratifying self by that love: '*They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*'

2. The Direction of the Imagination is a most important element in the grace of chastity, for its unlimited range is hard to curb and rein in. While soul and body are chaste

in deed, the imagination may be wandering in forbidden fields, and lighting on unholy scenes and images which tarnish (like the breath on a mirror) the beauty and delicacy and spotlessness of the chaste spirit. Imagination is stirred in three ways: (1) By direct assaults of Satan, the unclean spirit: '*Satan hath desired to have you*'; (2) by the evil of our own nature: '*The flesh lusteth against the spirit*'; (3) by influences and associations of the life without: '*The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are not of the Father, but are of the world.*'

There needs special care of this tender grace in some forms of religious work, especially in penitentiary work, owing to the necessary contact with evil, or to natural curiosity, or the loving interest in the lives and sorrows and sins of those under our care. But the pure mirror may be tarnished thus. Our Lord hides His Face from us as from those who have been unfaithful to Him. So chastity is wounded by evil imaginations, by revelations of evil we need never have known, leaving often a stain behind in the memory, and causing an abiding mark of unfaithfulness to Him. The benediction of chastity is: '*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*'

3. The guarding of the senses. This, too, is an essential element in true chastity. Imagination is fed by the unguarded senses; and then the stirred imagination reacts upon the senses, and forces them irresistibly into its service, willingly or unwillingly. The great glory of the Religious Life is to guard and hallow the sacredness of the Christian body—'*the temple of the Holy Ghost*'—in all its senses, and to preserve the preciousness and sweetness of the graces of innocence and sacred modesty and holy self-restraint in every action, outward or secret, so as to keep the virgin life pure before the Lord, and thus be faithful

to the great Vow of Chastity: '*These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*'—here, in the paths of purity and self-restraint, in unbroken allegiance to Him, and in undivided love, wholly His in body, soul, and in spirit, hereafter to be gathered within His palace on high, to gaze on His adorable beauty for ever and ever; called with the Blessed Virgin into His Presence: '*The virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company, and shall be brought unto Thee. With joy and gladness shall they be brought, and shall enter into the King's palace.*'

Address X.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE: TESTS OF FAITHFULNESS (*continued*).

The Vow of Obedience.

So far, in reviewing some of the tests of our faithfulness in the Consecrated Life, we have dwelt upon (1) faithfulness in temptation; (2) faithfulness to the vow of poverty; (3) faithfulness to the vow of chastity. There remains the other great vow—The Vow of Obedience—and we may pass on now to see how we stand in respect to it.

This is the great and comprehensive vow of the Religious Life. It may be said to include the other two. St. Thomas says: 'By the vow of poverty we sacrifice our riches; by the vow of chastity our body; but by obedience we offer up our will and understanding, and entirely sacrifice the whole man to God.' Hence in some religious orders (such as the Benedictine) the vow of obedience was the only vow. It was considered to comprise the vows of poverty and chastity. Thus we may gather the essence

and scope of this great vow. It implies, we see, entire self-surrender, the surrender of the whole will and understanding; it is the voluntary and intelligent dedication of the whole being to God. Consider our Blessed Lord's obedience: '*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me*'; or His Blessed Mother's obedience: '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.*'

In the Religious Life obedience to Superiors is enjoined on principle for the subdual of self-will and self-pleasing. You obey those set over you, not merely by a voluntary agreement, but as those set over you in and by our Lord. The essence of the act of obedience is that it is an act of obedience to *Him*: '*Ye have done it unto Me.*' To disobey is to choose your own will rather than the will of God. By indifference to this vow, '*He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.*' Hence Holy Scripture represents the perfection of the Human Life of our Lord as summed up in obedience: He '*learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.*' In other words, His obedience expressed the voluntary and absolute renunciation or surrender of Himself, and His perfect fulfilment of the will of God in all stages of His life: (1) At His coming: '*I came not to do Mine own will*'; (2) throughout His life: '*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me*'; (3) in His death: '*Not My will, but Thine, be done.*' All true religious obedience must be moulded after the pattern of His perfect self-surrender—the surrender of the will, the understanding, the whole being: '*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*'

Such, then, is the essence and the scope of this great

vow. Pass on to test yourselves. The Vow of Obedience is mainly concerned with the will. How far, then, is your will being perfectly conformed, really and inwardly, to the will of our Lord? Nothing short of this is required by a full obedience.

I. In answering this question you have to search out and test the adequate determination of the will. Is the will set with sufficient determination on a perfect obedience, on the full surrender of the inner self to God? It is not always so. Hence one cause of the inconsistencies in the Religious Life, in open or secret faults. Your property is given, the outward life given; but the will, it may be, reserves secretly its own fancied rights. Hence come willfulness, murmurings, restlessness. *'Take My yoke upon you'* by obedience, *'and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'* *'With my whole heart have I sought Thee: oh, let me not go wrong out of Thy commandments.'*

II. Many disappointments in the Religious Life can often be traced to a half or to a not wholly surrendered will. The call, the work, the worship, fail to bring the satisfaction you had anticipated. Why? Very often because your anticipations are formed too much in accordance with your own will. The will has not yet been sufficiently placed, in respect of the form of work or of joy and comfort of devotion, at the absolute disposal of our Lord. The soul has yet to learn what that meaneth: *'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.'* We will reserve for our next meditation one or two further tests of obedience. But be assured, dear Sisters, in this deepening conformity of will, this more and more perfect obedience, you will not only prove your faithfulness to your great vow: you will also find the secret of

abiding peace, of a heart at rest in itself, because surrendered wholly to Him, resting in Him, and, in that surrender, perfectly trusting itself to His love whatever He may order now or in the future, because you know Whom you have believed, Whose call you have obeyed : ‘ *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.*’

Address XI.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE : TESTS OF FAITHFULNESS
(*continued*).

Conformity with the Will of God.

WE pass on to consider a further question, involving a still deeper and more searching test—viz., The secret Rebelliousness of the Will. For, after the will, as a whole, has been surrendered, and, in the main, is set and determined on the fulfilment of the Vocation, there may often still linger a hidden rebelliousness of Will. This is very difficult to detect and subdue ; indeed, it is subdued only as the whole nature is transformed and brought gradually more and more under the dominion of grace. There are various manifestations of this spirit. Let us consider some, and examine ourselves in connection with them.

1. The inward and restless chafing of will against some special condition of the life—*e.g.*, an uncongenial work. This needs to be carefully watched, or, though not appearing outwardly, it will tend unconsciously to an unsettled, morbid, desponding condition of heart, taking all the vigour and brightness out of the Dedicated Life. Make a

resolution in Retreat to be content in feeling that all is ordered for you, that it is the Father's Will: '*The Cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? I am content to do it.*'

2. Another manifestation is secret impatience of rebuke, or of contradiction. A great proof of growth in obedience and of a conformed will is the power to bear a reproof or a contradiction humbly and cheerfully, especially, of course, reproofs which are harsh and undeserved. It is a test of submission of the will if you bear these quietly and trustfully. Can you do this? Do you find yourself increasingly able to do so? '*I opened not my mouth, for it was Thy doing*'; '*He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.*'

3. The control of natural sensitiveness, secret self-will, and self-love is another test. When the heart is wounded within you, can you lay aside the sore, check the ever-recurring feeling of pain, leaving yourself trustfully in the Hands of God? Because *you* will what *He* wills: '*O cast thy burden upon the Lord*'; '*Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.*'

4. Conformity with the Will of our Lord is the essence and the best proof of union with Him. The will is the citadel of our being, the stronghold of our nature; when this is surrendered to our Lord and Master, then we are wholly His. So, in summing up the perfectness of His obedience to the Father, our Lord made the perfect surrender of the will the crowning and decisive test: '*Nevertheless*' (however heavy the Cross, however bitter the Cup) '*not My will, but Thine be done.*'

So with you as you grow in the spirit of obedience: '*Be it unto me according to thy word.*' This indeed constitutes the inner faithfulness of the pledged heart of each

true Bride of the Lamb. To a heart thus wholly surrendered to Him He will show Himself in all His beauty and all His tenderness, in ever-brightening revelations of His love, in gifts of deepening trust and peace. He will come, and He will make thy heart the shrine of His abode, that He may be thine altogether, possessing thee, that thou mayest possess Him : ‘ *This shall be My rest for ever : here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.*’

Address XII.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE : TESTS OF FAITHFULNESS
(concluded).

Patience in Suffering.

WE have been dwelling together on some special tests of the Consecrated Life, taking for self-examination (1) faithfulness in temptation ; (2) faithfulness to the vows of poverty, of chastity, and of obedience. One great and crowning test remains—one that in a measure includes all—viz., Faithfulness in Suffering with our Lord.

In conclusion, let us think of this. When the Apostle St. Paul speaks of ‘knowing Him,’ one great element of that knowledge is the fellowship of suffering : ‘*That I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His Death.*’ So, indeed, our Blessed Lord Himself, referring to the conditions of true union with Himself, puts us to this test : ‘*Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of?*’ How do we stand the test of suffering? Are we entering into the fellowship of our Lord’s suffer-

ings? In answering this question, notice three elements of the Passion to test yourselves.

I. Our Lord suffering at the hands of others. He suffered in various forms—from (a) the contradiction of sinners; (b) the coldness of professing disciples; (c) the ingratitude of His chosen ones. In all true fellowship with the Passion we must enter, in some degree, into these forms of suffering. Are we able to bear as He bore? (1) In all personal injuries, contradictions, etc.; are you able to put aside the thought of self, and to say, ‘*Father, forgive them,*’ under the sting and pain of the suffering? ‘*He made Himself of no reputation.*’ (2) Think of His patience with the apathetic and irresponsive. How difficult! Still He laboured on. ‘*He taught daily in the temple*’ even to the end. (3) Or of His increasing efforts and prayers for those who were ungrateful and disappointing, for those who forsook Him; never growing weary; as our Lord said to His Apostle when about to deny Him: ‘*I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;*’ (4) or of His mental struggle with sin; this is seen in its intensest form in Gethsemane: ‘*The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*’—not His own sin, but *the sin of the world.*

II. How are you participating in this struggle? (a) Are you wrestling in prayer for the sins of others, with no sense of despair, no weariness, even when the sinner lapses again and again (a frequent experience in penitentiary work)? ‘*Watch and pray*’; ‘*Pray without ceasing.*’ (b) Are you, again, wrestling with your own sins, with real intention, and repeated resolutions, like St. Peter, when his Lord’s eye fell upon him, and ‘*he went out and wept bitterly*’? (c) Remember, He gives support in the inner struggle—the support of the Father’s love: ‘*There appeared an angel . . . strengthening Him*’; ‘*I will not*

leave you'; *'In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.'*

III. The desertion of God for a season. This was the special anguish of the Cross in the climax of the Passion: *'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'* We may be called to suffer this also, as one part of our fellowship in Christ's sufferings. Should it be so, sin is really its cause. In Christ it was not His own sin; in us it is often some secret sin unsubdued, which He would thus call to our remembrance, that He may mercifully deliver us from it: Lord, *'cleanse Thou me from my secret faults'*; or sometimes to bring out our faith and love,—the merciful chastisement of a loving Father: *'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him'*; and it will pass away: *'He will not alway be chiding, neither keepeth He His anger for ever.'* Whatever form our suffering and desolation take, trustful submission is our remedy and our peace. So was it with our Lord on the Cross: *'Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit.'* God will not always forsake us; the light of His Countenance will break out again upon the penitent soul and over the humble and contrite spirit: *'Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy Countenance upon us.'* And this will be an earnest of the time when that day shall break and all shadow of sin shall have passed away for ever: *'and in His light shall we see light'; 'they shall see His Face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads'; 'and there shall be no night there.'*



Notes of Addresses
given at a Community Retreat,
held at Clewer, 1897.

FOUNDED UPON ST. JOHN XVII.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

WE gather again, dear Sisters, at the call of our Blessed Lord, and by the leading of His Spirit, for a season of spiritual refreshment—to rest awhile amid the toils and anxieties of our daily life, to commune with ourselves a little more closely, and with our Lord, and to listen for some special message of His love, some counsel which we believe He has in store for us according to the special need and desire of our hearts: ‘*He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him.*’ Let us on the eve of our Retreat consider some of the dispositions with which we should enter upon it.

1. The desire for His grace and love. Kindle this. Fear any indifference. Let our desire be: ‘*Let me see Thy Countenance: let me hear Thy Voice.*’ We miss great opportunities of grace through the want of Desire: ‘*My soul is athirst for God*’; and the response of God to the Desire of the soul is: ‘*I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.*’

2. The need of the putting away of hindrances. This is an important disposition or preparation. We look for

a special visitation of our Lord; we are invoking continually the Presence of the Holy Ghost. Let us see that there is no barrier in our hearts, such as some cherished secret fault or sin, or some feeling of unlove or self-love, some harassing care, some coldness in devotion: '*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My Voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.*'

3. There must be a spirit of trustful self-surrender—putting ourselves absolutely into the Hands of God, opening our hearts unreservedly to the influences of His grace. There need not be too much self-introspection, but we should aim at calm trustfulness and a ready response to each call and movement of His Spirit in Retreat: '*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.*' May He speak at this time some counsel of His love to each one of us!

The subject chosen for special consideration is the Divine Intercession of our Lord before His Passion, as recorded in St. John xvii.

May the example of His perfect self-oblation kindle in our hearts the response suggested by the great Apostle St. Paul, that you may '*present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*'

Address I.

THE SCENE OF THE GREAT PRAYER.

THERE seems a special fitness that we should consider this sublime Chapter this week of Corpus Christi, when our thoughts go back to the great Sacrifice which our Lord

then pleaded, and which He pleads perpetually in heaven, and which His Church is ever pleading in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

What was the scene of this great prayer, this self-oblation, this self-consecration of the Great High Priest, and of this great intercession for His whole Church to the end of time? It is a little difficult to determine the spot on which it was offered. It was not in the Upper Chamber, for our Lord and the Apostles had left that (St. John xiv. 31). It could not have been in the streets of Jerusalem, on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane—that would be utterly out of harmony with the sublime address to the Father. It was not the Garden of the Agony itself, for it is recorded after this prayer that He passed ‘*over the brook Cedron*’ (St. John xviii. 1). So that in all probability it was offered in the Temple courts on the way to Gethsemane, and before He crossed the brook Cedron. As Bishop Westcott remarks, much of the imagery of these Chapters in St. John would be suggested by what was depicted in the Temple—*e.g.*, ‘*the true Vine*’ by the great golden Vine in the Temple. And, if we may say so, what place would be more fitting for the great oblation of Himself than the one place which God had chosen to ‘*set His Name there*’?

The custom of the priests at the Passover (says Josephus) was to open the Temple gates at midnight for the Paschal pilgrims, and our Lord entered indeed, not as a pilgrim, but as the Paschal Victim, to offer Himself to God: ‘*The Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world.*’

Such was probably the scene which we may take as the outline of our meditation. What are the special points on which the mind may rest in meditating?

I. Our Lord’s Great Act of Self-Consecration. The

Great High Priest consecrating Himself for the Sacrifice: '*I consecrate Myself*' (R.V., margin).

Consider the main features of the Eucharistic act: (1) Intercession; (2) self-oblation; (3) consecration; (4) the consecration of His Church in Him—the members of His Body associated with Him: '*I in them, and Thou in Me, that they also may be made perfect in one,*' so as to secure personal sanctity in all His members by virtue of this union, and especially of those who, in the Religious Life, are wholly united to Him. '*What manner of persons ought ye to be, ye Brides of the Lamb?*' What a call to personal holiness is yours!—in perfect self-surrender and dedication, in the wholly subdued will, in trustful acceptance of every trial, in motives absolutely unselfish, in the sanctification of the whole being—body, soul, and spirit!—'*Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*' And having this hope, must you not purify yourselves, '*even as He is pure*'?

II. The Altar, the Scene of our Continual Self-Dedication. If our Lord offered and consecrated Himself in the Temple, so should we do likewise. How fruitful is this thought! It is one great purpose of your dwelling continually in this holy place, sustaining perpetually your self-consecration in these three ways: (a) By private prayer and meditation; (b) by the Offices said in Choir; (c) by your Communions made here at the Altar.

Dwell on this one thought, that you are always offering, dedicating yourselves again and again to Him. This will help to neutralise distractions, and will give spiritual power and reality to your worship here: '*This shall be my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.*'

Address II.

THE HOUR OF THE SELF-OBLATION.

LET us pass from the scene of the great prayer and its teaching, to the hour: '*Father, the hour is come.*' What hour? The hour here alluded to is evidently the hour for the great act of Redemption, and this includes not only the hour of His Passion, but also the hour of His resurrection from the dead. Our Lord always embraces the suffering and the glory in one great act; as to the Greeks at the Feast, just before His Passion: '*The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified*' through death and the victory over death; again, here: '*The hour is come. Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.*' Our Lord's work in all its stages was wrought at the appointed hour. In the words of Bishop Westcott: 'There is no delay and no haste.' St. John continually notes this: '*His hour was not yet come*'; and again: '*When the hour was come,*' etc.—the hour for His manifestation, the hour for miracles, the hour for the Passion, for the Resurrection, for the Ascension—great redeeming acts, having their issues in eternity, and yet wrought at certain hours in time. '*Father, the hour is come.*' Such is the subject for our meditation. Let us pass on to special points.

I. Consider the Importance of Certain Times or Crises in our Lives. It is a momentous truth that the issues of our eternal destiny are made to depend on certain fixed periods in time in our brief life here on earth. It is a spiritual fact that there is a '*time of*' our '*visitation.*' Thou knewest or thou knewest it not—*e.g.*, in the Religious Life. Take

the Novitiate: these two short years—what a critical period in your lives, dear Sisters of the Novitiate! Are you realising the ‘*time of*’ your ‘*visitation*’? Or, again, the day of Profession: what is its bearing upon your selves, your lives, your characters, here and hereafter? *One day* but the issue *everlasting*: ‘*The hour is come.*’ With this take another thought. Your spiritual character depends very much on the use you make of such times. There must be no haste truly—‘*Wait upon God*’—but, on the other hand, no delay. When the hour is come, act promptly, act decisively: ‘*Straightway he arose and followed Him.*’ And especially in the Religious Life there are times of suspense, of waiting, of disappointment, of providential obstacles. How should we act? Wait; learn resignation, submission, and trustfulness. How blessed is the discipline of waiting! It is no loss of time; for, if well used, the character is being fitted by it for its vocation. The Hour as well as the Vocation are from God: ‘*They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.*’

But when the hour is come there must be no delay. There is great danger in hesitation, and indecision, and needless delay. The soul has to learn to combine in the religious temper a waiting spirit with a prompt obedience to His calls: ‘*Immediately they left all, and followed Him.*’

II. Think of the Hour of Communion. How much may hang on that hour! There must be an earnestness of intention (it is good to have special intentions) for every Communion. And you must expect lasting fruits from these hours of Communion, sometimes so disappointing at the time, but fruitful afterwards.

In this Retreat, in the Communion of this morning, what grace, or loss of grace, what special gift from the

eternal Giver, has been yours? *'Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.'*

Address III.

THE GLORY OF THE PASSION.

WE have considered the scene and the hour of the great self-oblation, and, following upon these, the importance of our earthly scenes and hours. We pass on now to consider the purpose of the great act itself—The Purpose and the Glory of the Self-oblation of the Eternal Son: *'Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.'*

What do we mean by the word *glorify*? It is 'to reveal the nature of,' as in the glowing prophecy of Isaiah: *'The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.'* It is the manifestation of the Divine Nature. How is this? For our Lord is entering now into the very depths of His humiliation, and is becoming *'obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.'* But His death was not all; it issued in 'His glorious Resurrection and Ascension,' in His victory over death and sin: *'Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death.'* So His Nature was revealed—His Divine Nature as the Son of God, the Godhead shining forth from the tabernacle of the flesh, Son of God and Son of Man, the Saviour of the world, and the Deliverer from the power of death, the Author of eternal life, to Whom the Father had given *'power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.'*

And once more: The revelation of the Nature of the Son

involved the further revelation of the Nature of the Father: '*Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.*' As in those other words of St. John: '*No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son Which is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him*'—revealed His Nature, especially His Nature as the Father—'*our Father,*' '*your Father which is in heaven,*' and at the close of all: '*I ascend to My Father and to your Father.*' The subject is suggestive of many thoughts for our meditation.

I. It puts suffering in a special light as the condition of glory, the necessary preliminary to it, a very part of it; not only that glory succeeds to suffering, but suffering is itself transfigured and '*turned into joy.*' Our Lord speaks of the glorification of suffering: '*the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*' So suffering is itself made luminous with heavenly radiance.

What is our experience of our own portion of suffering, whether bodily or spiritual? As we look back we may feel even now how it has been a blessing and grace. A light has been thrown upon it, and we see in that light its blessedness. Have His words found their counterpart in our experience: '*that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves*'?—the joy of sacrifice and suffering, an earnest of what shall be when the sufferings of this present life are seen in the light of that '*glory that shall be revealed*'?

II. Consider, further, the intimate knowledge of, and union with, the Son, the revelation of His Nature to the soul, and this especially in the Religious Life. As you seek to perfect your love to Him, He will reveal His love, He will reveal Himself, to you more and more. There are successive revelations in the spiritual life. He is your Guide in Vocation, your Friend and Helper in difficulties and

obstacles, the Bridegroom of your souls: '*My Beloved is mine, and I am His.*'

III. This knowledge leads on to the realisation of the glory of the Fatherhood of God: '*that Thy Son also may glorify Thee*'—i.e., may reveal Thy Nature and relation to those whom Thou hast given Him. It is of great importance in your spiritual life that you realise the Fatherhood of God, that you apprehend this blessed truth of the love and care of the Father. It will make your service a loving and filial service, and will still complaints and murmurings: '*the Cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*' It will also lessen scruples and self-harassings, which are a great snare to earnest souls, and which are so often a form of distrust of God and a snare of Satan. Let us leave in His hands the perplexities we cannot solve, and rest upon His promise: '*I will make darkness light before thee.*'

Address IV.

THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE.

WE have so far considered the scene, the hour, and the purpose of the great act of self-oblation of the Son. We pass now into a still deeper region of thought and mystery, as the sublime prayer proceeds: The Communication of the Eternal Life; '*That He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.*' This is presented to us here sacramentally. Our Lord had just been instituting the Holy Eucharist. He had been giving Himself in mystery to His disciples. And we may refer to the Sacramental teaching in St. John vi., where eternal life is

associated with the participation of His Flesh and Blood : ‘ *He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life* ’; to the same purpose are the words that follow in Chapter xvii. 3 : ‘ *This is life eternal that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.* ’ This knowledge implies the appropriation of the union with the Divine Person, as the Source of the Eternal Life. This is clear in the subsequent verses, as, e.g., ‘ *I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.* ’

This Life is repeatedly connected with the participation of Christ Himself, as in Chapter vi. : ‘ *He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.* ’ ‘ *I am the Living Bread. . . . If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever* ’—live eternally. Such is the groundwork of our meditation. Let us meditate on the great Gift, and commune together concerning it.

I. What is the history of our Sacramental Communion? What has been our realisation of the Person of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament? The hindrances to this may sometimes arise even from the very frequency of our Communion; or from the weakness of our nature, which cannot grasp so vast a mystery; or from some unsubdued and secret sin, which hides from us our Lord’s Presence : ‘ *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.* ’

II. Test yourselves as to the reality of your participation of Him. Have you a growing power over sin—not have you cessation from temptation, but have you power to overcome it? Are you growing in a heavenly mind, in accordance with the command, ‘ *Set your affection on things above* ’? Has His Image, have His own graces, been reflected in you? Is the Life of Jesus ‘ *made manifest in your mortal flesh* ’?

III. Let us concentrate our meditations more than we sometimes do on the Person of our Lord and the facts of His earthly Life. This sublime prayer which we are considering centres upon the Divine Person: '*I in them, and Thou in Me.*' The Apostles, especially St. John and St. Paul, dwell continually on the Person of Christ—His indwelling, His Image in us: '*That I may know Him and the power of His Resurrection*'; '*He abideth in us*'; '*Changed into the same Image*'; '*Christ is all and in all.*'

So with you, the life, reality, and power of meditation depends on this realisation: '*Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.*' '*I . . . will draw all men unto Me.*'

Address V.

THE GLORIFYING OF THE FATHER.

IN our last Meditation we considered the communication of the Eternal Life in the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord passes from the thought of the Redeemed, and the Life communicated to them, to that higher aspect of His work, on which He had already touched:—The Glorifying or Manifestation of the Father. This thought is a higher one, for it touches not so much, or not merely, upon the blessing of Eternal Life given to man, but upon the glory of the Father, the glory of God: '*I have glorified Thee upon the earth.*'

Let us dwell upon this point in our present meditation. The words contain or imply a review of our Lord's earthly Work and Ministry. The revelation of the Father was one

great purpose of that work. As we have already noticed, He is made known as '*the Father*,' '*your Father*': '*I ascend to My Father and to your Father.*' This work of our redeeming Lord is to be continued in heaven: '*Now come I to Thee.*' The continued interest in His Church on earth is insisted on by our Blessed Lord throughout these closing discourses: '*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you*'; '*I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter*'; '*The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me.*' And from this we learn for our comfort two great truths: (1) His mediatorial Ministry in heaven as our High Priest and Intercessor: '*He ever liveth to make intercession for them.*' (2) His Eucharistic Presence on earth: '*I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*'

One point naturally suggests itself for special reflection.

I. The glorifying of God is the climax of the Spiritual Life. How very difficult is it in daily life and work, even in our devotions, to realise this! The power of self clings to us in our highest efforts. It is very necessary to guard and watch and to restrain this, for it is very subtle. A change of work, or a difference in our position, may so easily bring self more prominently forward, and the conflict makes itself felt. A short prayer or memorial, or an act of the Presence of God, will help you in your struggle with self-love: '*Not I, but Christ liveth in me.*'

II. The purifying of the motives must be another very special aim in the Religious Life. This is a gradual work, which can only be attained by growing self-discipline and growing conformity to the will of God. As self is subdued, and as the will is more and more conformed to the Divine will, the motives become gradually and imperceptibly more and more pure. We grow into that perfect character, in

which all our desires and aims coincide with, and are one with the Divine Will: '*All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine.*'

Even in the Devotional Life self too often occupies the place of God. Our own feelings, our own wishes, our own successes and consolations engross us; prayer shuts out praise, and we become absorbed in our own needs, and forget the glory of God. It is very important that your devotions should not become too subjective. Rise out of yourselves to live to God, to His will, to His glory. Never neglect thanksgiving; you will find that habitual thanksgiving in devotion is a real test of your desire to glorify God: '*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give the praise*'; '*Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.*'

Address VI.

THE FINISHING OF THE APPOINTED WORK.

FROM 'the glorifying of the Father' we pass on to a further thought—the mode or method by which this glorifying was fulfilled: '*I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.*' In the true reading of the passage (see Bishop Westcott) the words should run thus: '*I glorified Thee on the earth, having finished the work which Thou hast given Me to do,*' *i.e.*, by completing or performing Thy work. Here we notice two chief points:

I. The perfect work. The meaning of the word 'finish' is to complete, or make perfect. Our Blessed Lord repeats the same truth in one of His last sayings on the Cross: '*It is finished.*' He does not mean *ended*, for this redeem-

ing work is continued in heaven, but—‘made perfect.’ The earthly work was a perfect one; the obedience was perfect; the propitiation perfect; the triumph perfect: ‘I have made perfect Thy work.’ How often is *our* work wanting in completeness and thoroughness!

II. This perfect work was not self-chosen; it was the *appointed* work. It is ‘*the work which Thou gavest Me to do.*’ On this our Blessed Lord always lays stress throughout His Ministry on earth. (a) In its very purpose: ‘*I came down from heaven not to do Mine Own Will, but the Will of Him that sent Me*’; (b) in its essence or substance: ‘*My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work*’; (c) in its final accomplishment; at the very close, as the summing up of all His earthly Life of obedience: ‘*Not My Will, but Thine be done.*’

His perfect obedience to the Father! How many thoughts arise out of this great truth or fact of our Lord’s work.

(1) Consider Vocation, the call of God. In all departments of the spiritual life this is momentous: ‘*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*’ But, above all, it is so in the Religious Life. Think of your Vocation, dear Sisters—its reality; its wonderfulness; your own faithfulness to it. When He has called have you answered? What has been, what is, your response to His call? ‘*The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*’

(2) We may consider the special work of the Vocation. Our Lord’s work was unique; none other could do it. It was ‘*the work which Thou gavest Me to do.*’ (a) How important an aspect of your Religious Life is your special work—the work appointed to you—be it penitentiary work, or teaching, or nursing, or mission work, or any other, however lowly. It is not self-chosen. In this you realise

your union with our Lord. The work, as His work, is a work appointed for you; whether congenial or not, whether in failure or success, still it is the work given you to do. (b) And there is blessedness in it as God's work. Are you happy and prosperous in it? Give God the glory. Are you failing in it, disappointed, lonely, and unhappy? Take courage; be of good cheer. It is God's work; it is enough for you if you can do something for Him. Far more blessed, surely, is it to do something for Him than for yourselves! One great blessing of uncongenial work is that it takes away our selfishness, and we learn to work for God only. So it elevates the spiritual character and makes it more truly one with the character of our Lord. Look on to the end through all discouragement or difficulty; persevere, watch, pray; work diligently, trustfully, hopefully to the end, that you may have some share in feeling that your appointed work has been done for Him: '*I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.*'

Address VII.

THE NOTE OF SANCTITY.

WE have dwelt upon the communication of the Eternal Life, especially in relation to the glory of God and to our appointed work.

Let us pass on now to the consideration of the three great notes of His Body, the Church—Sanctity, Truth, Unity—which come before us, you will recollect, in this sublime prayer of our Lord, and in special relation to Himself, Who is alone the Source of sanctity, the Source of truth, the Source of unity: '*I sanctify* (or consecrate,

R.V., margin) *Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth*; ‘*Sanctify them through Thy truth*’; ‘*That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee.*’

Let us make another preliminary observation. We bear in mind the Eucharistic character of this High Priestly Intercession. It was uttered just after the Institution, and all these notes of the Church are so many features or reflections of His Own Image, to be reproduced in His elect. His own abiding Presence with His Church is the great centre from Which these reflections of His Own Sanctity, and His Own Truth, and His Own Unity radiate. And that central Presence, by His commandment, is enshrined in the Divine Sacrament of His Body and Blood; for it is when ordaining the Holy Eucharist that He says: ‘*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*’; ‘*Because I live, ye shall live also*’; ‘*Abide in Me, and I in you.*’ ‘*He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit*’—the fruit of sanctity, the fruit of truth, the fruit of unity. He has associated for ever His Incarnate Presence, and Its life and power and all Its fruits, with the Blessed Sacrament, which He was then ordaining: ‘*This is My Body*’: ‘*this is My Blood*’; ‘*He . . . dwelleth in Me, and I in him,*’ in all My power of Sanctity, and Truth, and Unity.

Let, then, our great thought be Self-consecration: ‘*For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified.*’

I. The dedication of the life is a primary Christian duty: ‘*That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them and rose again.*’ It is of great importance to have a fixed aim and purpose of life; and a great element in the spiritual

character is to keep this aim and purpose steadily before us. For a fixed aim steadies and regulates the whole life. It is the mainspring of steadfastness. It counteracts hesitations, vacillations, weakness of will, the feebleness and want of vigour that is so apt to impair and weaken the character: '*I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?*' '*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.*' There is a great blessing in thoroughness. Do every duty thoroughly. Let the life be consecrated in all its parts to God. Each, even the least and most commonplace work, is for Him. Do all, whatever it may be, in His Name: '*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.*'

II. Again, there should be a Self-consecration in reference to any special crisis. In the spiritual life of most of us such a crisis will almost surely come at one time or another. It may be that you have to decide on Vocation, or to meet a special form of temptation, or some great inward sorrow or struggle, or, possibly, a special trial of faith,—an assault of the Evil One to draw you away from Him. At such a supreme moment fall back upon the great fact of the past dedication and consecration of your life to God. Decide, stand firm, overcome, by the fact that your life is altogether His: '*Not My will, but Thine be done.*' The Sacrifice of the Cross was the supreme crisis in our Lord's Life. For this He girded up all His strength of obedience and love, and '*became obedient unto death.*' So may it be with you; may you with the Blessed Apostle be able to say '*Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.*' And again: '*I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor*

height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So shall our Lord's words be fulfilled in each one, and you, too, shall be '*sanctified through the truth.*'

Address VIII.

THE NOTE OF TRUTH.

WE pass on from the note of Sanctity to the note of Truth: '*Sanctify (or consecrate) them in the truth: Thy word is truth*' (R.V. and margin).

Bishop Westcott says on this verse: 'The 'truth,' the sum of the Christian revelation, the word of God, at once embodied by Christ, and spoken by Him, is (as it were) the element into which the believer is introduced, and by which he is changed. The 'truth' is not only a power within him, by which he is moved; it is an atmosphere, in which he lives. The end of the Truth is not wisdom, which is partial, but holiness, which is universal. And he adds, in reference to the words, '*Thy word is truth*': 'This teaching must not be limited to His spoken Word, or to the written Word, but extended to every utterance of God in nature and history through *the WORD.*' Truth, no less than sanctity, is embodied in the Person of our Lord: '*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*' His Abiding Presence with the Church is the centre of truth as well as of sanctity.

And this suggests one or two important reflections, which may help us in our meditation.

I. The Blessed Sacrament, as It is the centre of sanctity and of unity, so also is It the centre of truth. It is in the

Sacramental mystery that we come to Him Who is the Truth.

What is there more longed for and desired than the reunion of Christendom?—‘*O pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*’ But the basis of this reunion must be ‘*the truth,*’ not compromise or indifference. It must be by the drawing of all towards the centre of truth: ‘*I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.*’ By holding on to, by rising to, by lifting people up to Sacramental truth, to acknowledge the One Truth, this is the basis of any true reunion. The Religious Life, setting forth the Blessed Sacrament as the great act of Christian worship, is a true help in this direction. Within your sphere you are helping to draw on the Church towards the truth: ‘*Sanctify them in the truth*’; ‘*Thy word is truth.*’

II. Another important reflection bearing especially upon the Devotional Life is this: Devotion should not be simply subjective—you should not, that is, dwell merely on your own feelings and desires, but fix the mind and heart on the objective realities of truth, the facts of our holy religion.

III. It is the special purpose of meditation to help us to realise these Facts; and there should be more thanksgiving, more adoration of God, more apprehension of His Nature, His Presence, His wondrous Attributes: ‘*I have set God always before me.*’

You will find in such meditation a great safeguard against scruples and morbidness of mind, for these are often the result of a too subjective form of devotion, of sinking down into self, and being self-absorbed. Lift up the heart to the Truth above you, to Him Who is the Truth, to His mercy and His love, and you will find that there is great consolation in this rising to the truth of

God. It is a refuge from ourselves: '*Thou art a Place to hide me in*'; '*The Eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms.*'

Address IX.

THE NOTE OF UNITY.

WE have considered the note of Sanctity and the note of Truth. There is yet one other note of the Church, on which our Blessed Lord dwells with special emphasis in this Eucharistic prayer—the note of Unity: '*That they all may be one.*' Our Lord reiterates this prayer again and again. Three important thoughts arise here:

I. Our Lord looks on into the future of the Church: '*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.*' We are entitled to look onward, however distant the future, to a day of reunion. His prayer cannot fail. And He has prayed that all those who believe, the whole Christian Church, '*may be one.*'

II. Consider the effect of the unity of the Church upon the world: '*That the world may believe.*' The conversion of the world is to be a fruit of the unity of the Church. And yet, further, the knowledge, the full assurance of the faith depends upon that unity: '*That the world may know.*' Disunion is the great hindrance to missionary work. The world cannot be won to Christ, because His Church is not '*at unity in itself*'; '*O pray for the peace of Jerusalem!*'

III. The Blessed Sacrament is the great bond of unity:

‘*That they may be one, even as We are One*’; ‘*I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One.*’

This implies that our union with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is the true source of our union one with another. It is to this Holy Sacrament that we must look as the centre of unity as well as of truth and sanctity. In our own day the revival of Eucharistic teaching and the increase of Eucharistic Communion are indeed hopeful signs. As Christ dwells in us, even as the Father dwells in Him, the life-giving union with our Lord unites us in one Body: ‘*We, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that One Bread.*’ Let us, then, pass on and dwell in meditation on one or two special points.

1. The unity of the Church must be a subject for perpetual intercession in Christ’s mystical Body. Christ prayed for this unity, so those that are His carry on the intercession age after age. The time—God’s time; the way—God’s way; and He reminds us: ‘*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*’ The time will surely come when He will ‘*establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*’

2. The unity of a Religious Community is a reflection of the Church’s unity. This great Community! On its unity depends its power for good, its effect on the world, its growth and spiritual fruitfulness: ‘*That all may be one.*’

3. And if so, how needful is it that the peace of Christ should keep and guard your souls! Not only is outward unity necessary; you must go still deeper. There must be peace within your own hearts. The soul, like Jerusalem, must be ‘*at unity in itself.*’ There must be

trustfulness of heart, peace from troubles and anxieties—the peace of a subdued and conquered self, the peace of an ever-deepening and closer union with the Heavenly Bridegroom: ‘*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.*’

Address X.

THE JOY OF FELLOWSHIP WITH OUR LORD.

LET us pass on now at the close of our Retreat to a still higher range of thought, to the Joy of Fellowship with Christ, His Own Divine Indwelling, and the Vision of His glory. ‘*These things I have spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*’

Consider the strangeness of this joy. Our Blessed Lord speaks of His joy at this strange moment, at the very entrance to His Passion. It was not the joy of the world—the human, outward, self-gratifying joy—but the Divine and perfect joy of self-surrender, self-dedication, self-consecration, the joy of perfect harmony with the Father’s Will, the joy of suffering for others that they might be blessed, the perfect unselfishness of this joy ‘*that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.*’

Human sorrow is often the material of this joy. As our Lord Himself rejoiced in the midst of His Passion, so He promises to those that are His: ‘*Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*’ The human sorrow or sacrifice becomes Divine joy. This is a frequent spiritual experience, as, *e.g.*, in such ways as these: Sorrow opens the way to the deeper knowledge of God, and reveals

mysteries of the Divine Love: ‘*Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest.*’ Joy follows on any act of real self-sacrifice, and so we find Christ’s joy fulfilled in us. The eternal joy itself is the fruit of our sorrow here upon earth: ‘*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy*’; ‘*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*’ Let us pass on in our meditation to dwell on this joy. It is, you recollect, one of the great fruits of the Spirit: ‘*The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy.*’

I. Natural joy—joyousness of heart—is often one of God’s gifts and blessings, and is very helpful. It issues in cheerfulness, thankfulness, and zeal. But in the Christian life—in the Religious Life especially—it must be raised into the supernatural order, that it may be the joy of the Holy Ghost, the joy that is Christ’s.

II. This joy becomes our comfort in seasons of depression: ‘*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*’ Natural joy, unchecked, might become earthly and self-pleasing. The antidote and correction of this tendency is often sorrow and darkness of heart. We rise through these from the joy of the flesh to the joy of the Spirit. The joy of Christ is not a *feeling*, but a settled habit and temper of mind, which becomes more and more indifferent to outward things, and lies deep as a well-spring in the hidden depths of the soul. Thus the joy of Christ is fulfilled in us.

III. This is the joy of Communion—the Presence of our Lord, the light of that Indwelling Presence transfiguring human sorrow and darkness. He is Himself our joy: ‘*In Thy Presence is the fulness of joy*’; ‘*My joy shall be in the Lord.*’

Address XI.

THE DIVINE INDWELLING.

FROM joy in Christ—the joy of Christ in us—we are led on to its true source—The Indwelling of Christ in us.

Our Lord's prayer for His Own was: '*That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*' This suggests two thoughts.

I. That the love of the Father for the Eternal Son may be extended to those that are His. The consciousness of that love is to be their joy. Upon that love our Lord rested; in it He rejoiced always. So in the conflicts and sorrows of His disciples the assurance of this Divine Love is their continual stay and joy: '*sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing.*'

II. The indwelling of Christ in His Own. This is the great manifestation, the very essence of the Divine Love, their perfect joy and strength: '*At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.*' Let us dwell for a little on this mystery of the Divine Indwelling—'*I in them*'—the power, the manifestation of Christ's Presence in us.

Think of some of the issues of this Indwelling.

1. (a) A participation of the Divine Life by our union with His Life communicated to us: '*Because I live, ye shall live also.*' (b) The consciousness of a supernatural life, of its powers and energies, its zeal and love. It is '*not I that live, but Christ liveth in Me.*' (c) Our Communions are the channels of this life: '*He that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever*'; '*He that eateth Me even he shall live by Me.*' How far, dear Sisters, are you cherishing, or

in any way hindering, this life? Do you fulfil each work in dependence on it, realising it, sustaining the consciousness of it, living up to it? *'Christ liveth in me'; 'I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me.'*

2. The Light of the Indwelling Presence: *'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.'* It reveals mysteries of Faith; it solves the perplexities of life, and transfigures its darkness: *'Shew the Light of Thy Countenance, and we shall be whole'; 'In Thy Light shall we see Light.'*

3. And, lastly, always remember that love is the great condition of this Divine Indwelling: *'That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them'; 'He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.'* Tokens of this love are found in cheerful submission to His Will; in our self-oblation to Him in body, soul, and spirit; in the desire for His Presence; in earnest prayer; in fervent and devout Communion: *'Let me see Thy Countenance; let me hear Thy Voice.'* Kindle this desire; shake off indifference. His Presence is the great desire of the heart here on earth: *'My soul longeth after Thee in a barren and dry land where no water is.'* And *'the fulness of joy'* hereafter will be *'to see Him as He is.'*

Address XII.

THE VISION OF GLORY.

WE have been considering 'The Joy of Christ in us' and 'His Divine Indwelling.' We pass on now to think of 'The Fulness of Joy in the Eternal Presence: *'That they*

may be with Me where I am.' The great end of the Divine Indwelling is the Beatific Vision of the Lord: '*That they may behold My glory.*'

Our past meditations during the Retreat have led up to this as the sum and end of all—the future Vision of our Lord's Glory: '*Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me . . . may behold My glory.*' This Vision is the great hope of the Redeemed: '*We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*' So, too, in the Apocalyptic Vision of the final Glory: '*There shall be no more curse . . . but His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His Face.*' This Vision of Glory is the consummation of the bliss of the Redeemed. Let us ponder on it for a little in our closing meditation.

I. The Divine Image or Likeness in us by which we are fitted to behold His glory is formed in us by Eucharistic Communion. There we are made '*partakers of the Divine Nature.*' We are '*changed into the same Image from glory to glory.*' '*Christ*' is '*formed in*' us by successive communications of the Divine Nature. There is a gradual transformation into His Likeness here, begun on earth by partaking of His Body and Blood; then the mysterious progress in '*the world beyond,*' the spiritual nature perfected in the Likeness of our Lord in the Eucharist of Paradise: '*The Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them . . . and lead them unto living fountains of waters.*'

The Likeness has its consummation in the Resurrection, when there shall be the reunion of body, soul, and spirit in the glorious Spiritual Body: '*He shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working, whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself*' (R.V.).

II. The Divine Image formed in us is the condition of

the Beatific Vision. This seems the true meaning of the words; '*We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*' Like beholds like. The spiritual nature discerns spiritual things, and so the Nature of Christ formed in us is capable of beholding the Divine Vision: '*They shall see His Face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads.*'

III. The glory of that Vision. Then shall be fulfilled that which has ever been the great longing of the human soul—the Vision of God. '*My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the Living God; When shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?*' How full of glory shall that Vision and Presence be! Life for ever, unbroken by change and death, by sorrow, or pain, or inward suffering: '*There shall be no more death,*' but '*Light in which is no darkness at all.*' And in that Light we shall behold the Form and Glory of the Incarnate upon the Throne, with the holy Angels round about Him, and His saints still nearer to His Person, and the forms of loved ones, whom we knew in weakness and suffering here, now radiant with His Glory, reflecting the Light that streams forth in all its fulness from His Countenance.

Truly '*the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.*' Let us live henceforth, dear Sisters, with that Glory in view. May all your life here on earth, your toils, your sacrifices, your self-renunciation, your worship at the Altar, your Offices in Choir, your secret prayers and longings and meditations, be a continual preparation for that Glory.

Then, when we attain to it, shall every desire of our redeemed nature be fulfilled: '*When I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.*'

Notes of Addresses given
at a Retreat for Wantage Associates
at Plymouth, October, 1887.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

WE meet, dear Sisters, for a little season of Retreat, putting ourselves under the especial guidance of the Holy Ghost. Let us, as we enter upon it, think of the solemnity and blessedness of such a season, in which we may hope to gain special light, special counsel, special consolation, according to our different needs. Such seasons, as we learn from Holy Scripture, have ever been times of special communication from God to favoured souls, as, for instance, in the case of Moses on Mount Sinai, Elijah in the wilderness, or of the Disciples at the blessed seasons when their Lord bid them come '*apart and rest awhile*' under His guidance and in His Presence, or, more specially still, as on the Mount of Transfiguration He reveals Himself, as to none else, radiant in glory in company with departed saints. So may He reveal Himself to you in this Retreat. Prepare yourselves now for His revelation to you, be it what it may. Listen, and He shall speak: '*Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth*'; '*I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me,*' resting assured that He will

fulfil His promise: The Holy Ghost '*shall teach you all things,*' and '*guide you into all truth.*'

The subject I propose to put before you in our Meditation is the Nature and Ministry of Angels, partly because we have just been keeping the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels, and also because of the great practical importance of this special subject to the spiritual life; for we must never forget that Holy Scripture makes very plain to us the fact that evil angels, under their prince, have a fearful power over the soul, and, secondly, thank God, the comfort, and assistance, and obedience, and example of the holy angels is constantly appealed to and set before us, for our contemplation and encouragement: '*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*'

Realise, then, the purpose of your Retreat here. God has some message for you. What will it be? 'O Lord, give me a ready heart, cleansed and pure, to be able to understand Thy Voice, and to fulfil it': '*I will follow Thee*'; '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.*' Secondly, make a definite Resolution, so that the blessing of the Retreat may be permanent. This will enable you, with God's help, to carry out in your after-life the counsels you receive, or, perhaps, you may prefer to renew some former resolution which has not been well kept. Do not be content to receive impressions only; these will fade away. Resolve to *act* upon what God makes clear to you as His Will for you: '*I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed, to keep Thy righteous judgments.*' Do not let yourselves be in any way over anxious. Enter upon the Retreat in the spirit of loving trustfulness: '*Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him*'; '*In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.*' Such was the

spirit cultivated by the saints of old as they entered into the Presence of God. Let it be yours, dear Sisters. Remember the promise: '*Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*'

Address I.

THE NATURE OF ANGELS.

I PROPOSE, during the three days of Retreat, to set before you the subject of our meditation from three different points of view: (1) the Nature; (2) the Ministry; (3) the Example of Angels. We turn now to the consideration of the Nature of Angels.

I. Notice the distinction between angelic and human nature, angels being pure spirits, man's nature being both spiritual and material (God having given him a body, soul, and spirit). And, let us recollect, Holy Scripture calls our special attention to the fact that in the Incarnation '*He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.*'

II. The nature of angels is purely spiritual: '*He maketh His angels spirits.*' They are not phantoms endued with the powers of spiritual being, but spirits with powers of will, intelligence, and of contemplation. The sin of the angels who fell was pride, the great virtue of the Holy Angels being their perfect obedience, as in full light of God's majesty and in the contemplation of His glory they submit their wills to Him. Angels are not hindered or limited by fleshly conditions, nor by a material body, and this we know—that human nature, when it is spiritualised

and perfected, will be made '*like unto the angels.*' Risen human nature, the portion of those who are '*children of the Resurrection,*' as our Lord says, will be incorruptible when '*Death is swallowed up in Victory.*'

III. It is important to bear in mind the fact that the angels have Personality. Personality is inherent in the spirit. Beware of the popular error which would confine personality to bodily presence. The Devil, the prince of the Fallen Angels, is a Person, and his power against us a personal power. He '*goeth about seeking whom he may devour.*' And, in like manner, the Holy Angels are no phantoms, but personal friends, guides, succourers: '*The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them*'; '*He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee in their hands, that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone.*'

Consider then specially: Our Personal Relation to the Angels; our connection with them; their influence over us, and find here—

(a) Warning. Ever remember that the Devil and his angels exercise a fearful influence over our spiritual nature: '*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*' How often has not some material temptation been the ruin of a soul! and temptation is a special proof of the personal influence over us of evil spirits. We are acted upon at such times by an evil power from without—a power organised with consummate skill, and directed against our individual souls. The temptations of Job, of David, of St. Peter, are distinctly attributed to the personal agency of Satan. What need of care and of

watchfulness is there on the part of the child of God—what need of Divine help!—‘*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*’; ‘*Be sober, be vigilant*’; ‘*Take unto you the whole armour of God.*’ Why? ‘*That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.*’ How dare we, as many do, trifle with temptation, or look upon it with indifference, forgetful of our danger? ‘*Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*’

(b) But, on the other hand, what comfort and support may be found in the thought of the personal presence with us of the Holy Angels in times of temptation! And this is constantly set before us in Holy Scripture. Think of Jacob and his dream in his hours of bitter loneliness, the Angels ministering to our Lord, the Angel delivering St. Peter, comforting St. Paul, reassuring St. Joseph, encouraging the holy women in their surprise and sorrow. Let us try to realise their presence with ourselves—ministering spirits bearing messages of sympathy to the sorrowful and the downcast, strengthening us by their example in hours of temptation, teaching us how to do God’s will on earth, as they do it in heaven; the bearers of God’s mercy and of His grace to God’s children in this world. So shall there often appear to us ‘*an angel from Heaven*’ strengthening us: ‘*Ye are come unto Mount Sion . . . and to an innumerable company of angels*’; ‘*He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*’

Address II.

THE FALL OF THE ANGELS.

WE pass on now to consider a great mystery, and one full of momentous significance—The Fall of the Angels. The fact is referred to in Holy Scripture in various passages. St. Peter speaks of '*the angels that sinned*'; St. Jude of '*the angels which kept not their first estate*'; and St. John the Divine, in the Book of the Revelation (a passage chosen as the Epistle for St. Michael's Day), '*There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels.*' Some light, however, is thrown upon the mystery, and we learn that their Fall was occasioned by direct rebellion against God: '*The devil fought and his angels.*' But, further, Genesis vi., and tradition alike, refer to actual transgressions on the part of the fallen angels, and they are found inciting human beings to sin, and are spoken of as '*the angels that sinned,*' by wilful self-pleasing, wandering apparently at will, and so passing out of God's protection and presence.

Holy Scripture also gives us hints and intimations of the origin and main object of the angelic rebellion. It seems to have centred round the Incarnation. It was originally the eternal purpose of God to take upon Him man's nature; this offended the pride and stimulated rebellion on the part of those angels who sided with the Devil, himself an archangel. See Rev. xii. 7-12 (the Epistle for St. Michael's Day), and verses 4 and 5 of the same Chapter throw further light upon the subject, the birth of '*a man child*' being understood to refer to our

Lord's birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Hence the malice and opposition of Satan, and his intense hatred of the Redeemer and the Redeemed. He is in Holy Scripture the Adversary, the Deceiver, the Accuser of the brethren. And so by rebellion against God, by wilful opposition to Him, in the full light of the knowledge, the glory, and the love of God these angels fell, as in after ages man fell, abusing the gift of free will bestowed upon them by God, and He has cast them down to hell: '*Their own habitation . . . reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day.*'

The special point I would have you consider in connection with this is: The Warning afforded us by the Fall of the Angels; and in this we are following the line taken both by St. Peter and St. Jude.

I. Beware of a rebellious will. How great a peril to some! What subtle and manifold forms of sin arise from it!—sins against God's commandments, sins of discontent and murmuring against the sphere of life in which we are placed, against the kind of work given to us to do; against the place in which we have to live, or perhaps against the suffering which we may be called upon to endure, the Cross that has been laid upon us that we '*might bear it after Jesus.*' What warnings against murmuring and rebellion we find in Holy Scripture! The whole history of the life of the Chosen People in the wilderness is a warning in itself: '*They rebelled against Him with their own inventions, and were brought down in their wickedness*'; or again: '*They rebelled against the words of the Lord, and lightly regarded the counsel of the Most Highest.*'

II. Rebellion finds its issue in a fall from God; this involves loss of grace, the lower nature gaining mastery

over the higher nature; gross sins of sensuality, intemperance, sins against purity, unfaithfulness to the marriage vow, are all the outcome of rebellion against God: '*Lust came upon them in the wilderness: and they tempted God in the desert.*'

III. Or we may trace to the same source a different class of sins: those that arise from Presumption and Self-will. Beware of following here the example of the evil angels, for sins of envy and detraction are especially sins of the Devil. Beware of such; hardness of heart is the natural outcome of yielding to such sins—sins of him who is the Envier of the Incarnation and the Accuser of the brethren.

IV. Your self-examination should turn in Retreat upon such points as these: Is there in God's sight any pride, self-love, envy, jealousy, any tendency to murmuring, any rebellion of spirit against God in my soul? How do I 'order myself' towards my parents, or my husband, or my employer, or towards anyone set over me by God, especially if they have not had the same spiritual advantages or instruction that I have had? Am I kind, considerate, patient, gentle, or proud, unforbearing, self-opinionated, unloving, selfish? '*Pride goeth before destruction*' is as true of man and woman as it was of '*the Devil and his angels.*' This must at all costs be subdued, the spirit of envy must be cast out—envy that led to our Lord's Crucifixion ('*He knew that for envy they had delivered Him*': and we know who it was that tempted them to envy). The same with jealousy and with murmuring: there is no place for such in the soul of a child of God: '*God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble*'; '*Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*'

Address III.

THE FALLEN ANGELS AND THE FALL OF MAN.

WE have considered the cause and motive of the Fall of the Angels, and have tried to apply its warning to ourselves. Let us carry our consideration a stage further, for another inquiry suggests itself—viz., What was their Influence upon Man after their Fall? We shall find this a subject of deep practical significance.

The words of the Epistle for Michaelmas Day arrest our attention: ‘*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea: for the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*’ Such words are, it is needless to say, intended to invite us to watchfulness, and also to warn us both of the anger and the malice of the Evil One.

I. The original envy of Satan, carried out in malice and hatred, compassed the Fall of Man, with its consequence, the corruption of human nature. Holy Scripture is full of instances of the direct attacks of Satan upon individuals—*e.g.*, upon Job, Saul, David, Ahab, etc.; upon our Blessed Lord Himself; upon St. Peter; upon Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira, and others. Or, again, on a larger scale, so to speak, upon the Chosen People in the wilderness and in the Promised Land, in tempting them to murmuring, rebellion, and idolatry. In every instance the malice and hatred of the Devil can be seen most plainly. So that from such examples alone we may deduce two special lessons: (*a*) The great power of the evil angels over man, whether exercised in times of temptation, or, as in the case of Job, in the infliction of suffering, overruled by

God; (b) the fact that the evil angels are permitted to assault the good as well as the bad; David as well as Ahab; our Lord Himself; St. Peter as well as Judas.

II. Further, we are well aware that their attacks upon God's servants are made with especial malignity. It is an awful thought, but it is true. Well may our Lord warn us to '*Watch and pray.*' Well may St. Peter give us the benefit of his own experience when he says that '*Your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*'; and he adds, '*whom resist steadfast in the faith.*'

III. For our comfort let us remember that the power, the wrath, the malice of the evil angels is under limitation. They cannot go beyond what God permits. We see this in the Old Testament in the case of Job, and still more in the New Testament, in the history of our Lord's Temptation in the Wilderness and the Agony in Gethsemane. We see in this (the case of our Lord) that the Incarnation and Its Virtues are the death-blow to the ultimate triumph of Satan: '*I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*' And remember the victory of our Lord has been made over to the Redeemed.

'The First-begotten of the dead,
 For us He rose, our glorious Head,
 Immortal life to bring;
 What though the saints like Him shall die,
 They share their Leader's victory,
 And triumph with their King.'

Still the wrath and malice of the Devil continue (restrained by the Incarnation, it is true), and will continue till '*all things shall be subdued unto Him,*' when the Devil shall be cast into the bottomless pit, and the power of

evil destroyed for ever in the '*everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels*': as of old, '*they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in Heaven.*'

Such is the groundwork of our meditation. Let us occupy ourselves with one special point arising out of it: The Mystery of Temptation—that great and awful fact which testifies to the existence and power of evil spirits and their influence over man.

I. The power of temptation is twofold; it depends (*a*) upon the capacities of the evil spirit; and (*b*) upon the corruption of human nature. Our Lord felt the full force and power of the Tempter both in the Wilderness and in Gethsemane, and met it and conquered. His blessed example impresses upon us the need of prayer, of fasting, of self-denial, if we too would meet temptation victoriously: '*Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation*'; '*This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*' Are we really using these weapons to any good purpose as Satan from time to time assaults us? If David, if St. Peter fell, who are we that we should escape?

II. Think of the safeguards given us against temptation: (*a*) Self-control, self-discipline, self-mortification, so that we may attain complete self-mastery. The corrupt body needs restraint: '*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.*' (*b*) The appointed Fasts of the Church. Do we always remember their spiritual meaning, necessity, and power? They should be observed as opportunities of bringing the appetites and passions into subjection to the Spirit: '*Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.*' '*Be ye, therefore, sober, and watch unto prayer.*'

III. Do not forget that there is an especial blessing in the endurance of temptation: '*Blessed is the man that*

endureth temptation,' says St. James, because, if rightly met, if resisted by the power of grace, temptation becomes a means of spiritual strength. We find in it (a) a test of Obedience. God proves us to find us '*worthy for Himself.*' And (b) an exercise of Grace. Patience, trust, self-control—almost all graces are exercised and strengthened by temptation, and each temptation overcome is a victory over Satan, and a new power gained to the spiritual character. (c) It is, further, a sign of God's favour: '*Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.*' He would find us '*worthy for Himself.*' So that in one sense (and a very real one) temptation may be a source of comfort to us; it is a sign of God's Presence with the soul. He has not left us to ourselves. It is His purpose to purify, elevate, sanctify us by means of temptation, and He Who is ever faithful '*will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it*' (R.V.). '*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.*' Let our safeguard be prayer, and then will Holy Angels minister to us, and rejoice in our triumph. Yes, it is true: '*The Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them*'; '*Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid, and, though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him.*'

Address IV.

THE ANGELIC MINISTRY.

WE pass on now from the nature to The Ministry of Angels: ‘*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*’ Let us consider the meaning of this passage. Two words are used in the Greek Testament to express the idea of Ministry: (1) *λειτουργία*, which means a service of holy adoration offered to God; and (2) *διακονία*, which refers to a ministry to man and to the universe. So that the angelic worship mentioned in Isaiah vi. or in the Book of the Revelation is a *λειτουργία*, while the angelic ministry to man—*e.g.*, in the case of Jacob and St. Peter—to our Lord Himself, and to His ‘*little ones*,’ is a *διακονία*, for they are sent forth for a ministry (*εἰς διακονίαν*)—on service, that is, to the Heirs of Salvation. Both ideas are preserved for us in the Collect for Michaelmas Day: ‘*Mercifully grant that as Thy Holy Angels always do Thee service in heaven*’ (here is the reference to the *λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα*), ‘*so by Thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth*’ (here is the reference to the *διακονία* of the angels).

I. This twofold order of the angels is further subdivided into nine orders. We gather this from various passages of Holy Scripture, the names of the various orders being as follows: (1) Seraphim, (2) Cherubim, (3) Thrones, (4) Dominions, (5) Principalities, (6) Powers, (7) Virtues, (8) Archangels, (9) Angels.

To explain more fully: the Seraphim (Isa. vi. 1-3) are

angels of love; the Cherubim are angels of knowledge, (Gen. iii. 24; Exod. xxv. 20; Ps. lxxx. 1, xcix. 1); Thrones, God's dwelling-place (Col. i. 16). These three orders are represented as being before the Throne, the councillors of God. Dominions, Principalities, Powers, (Eph. i. 21, iii. 10; Col. ii. 10), are those who rule over inferior angels, and restrain the powers of the evil angels, and who minister to the universe; Virtues (called by some, Authorities), those that '*excel in strength*' (Ps. ciii. 20); Archangels, chief messengers and the guardian angels of nations (1 Thess. iv. 16; Dan. x. 20, 21, xii. 1); Angels, literally, messengers, who worship God in heaven, but who also minister to man on earth (Heb. i. 14).

This division is adopted by St. Chrysostom, St. Gregory and the Fathers generally, but must not be pressed arbitrarily. The Worship and Service of the Angels are often combined, as in the case of St. Gabriel (St. Luke i. 19); or, again, in the case of the Seraphim (Isa. vi. 3, 6).

So much for the outline of our meditation; though to a great extent speculative, it is full of the deepest practical teaching, and might suggest many points for careful consideration. Let us content ourselves with one thought of great interest and importance in its bearing upon our spiritual life. It is suggested by the twofold aspect of the angelic ministry—viz., the due Proportion, in the Spiritual Life, between Devotion and Work, between our Prayers and our Active Service.

I. Every Christian has a work to do for God, for Christ and His Church. What is your work? It may be special, it may be ordinary—'*To everyone his work*'; and this work is to be done for God.

II. Devotion is the animating principle of spiritual

work. We are not as God's children to be content with mere activity in good works, but we must see that our activity is directed, regulated, inspired, calmed by devotion. There is a tendency in this busy age to neglect devotion, quiet meditation, prayer, to make mere activity everything. Is it not well at times to call to mind our Lord's awful warning on the subject of works done for Him without devotion?—'*Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.*' Good works done in and for ourselves with wrong and evil motives will never be acknowledged by Him. How significant in this connection are His words in St. John xv. 5 — '*He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.*'

Without devotion, or in proportion as it is divorced from devotion, all spiritual work becomes defective. We find ourselves wanting in thoroughness; wanting in constancy, without perseverance in our work, fitfully taking up work and letting it go; when we notice that we are working from wrong or from mixed motives, for our own self-gratification; or in rivalry with others; jealous or vain; with no sense of seeking God's glory; we may well be anxious. How many of our best works are in one or other of these ways tainted!—'*All seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's.*' Is this in any sense true of you?

III. It is a great question in all true, earnest hearts, How am I really to seek only God's glory, like the Holy Angels? You must be content with attaining such blessed-

ness gradually, step by step. It cannot be attained at once. Set the standard before you and go on towards it patiently and trustfully. Gradual conformity to the Will of God will bring about your longing desire to serve Him faithfully; and, remember, conformity of will is best attained by more and more personal Communion with Him—in a word, by devotion, by being, like the Angels, continually in God's Presence. So shall you learn from their example to give glory and honour and thanks to God.

Strive, then, after a truer proportion in your life between work and devotion, devotion and work, as in the angelic ministry—your work God's service, your devotion entire and absolute. So shall you be like the Holy Angels, and be inspired with the true angelic spirit: '*Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of Thee*'; '*O praise the Lord ye Angels of His: ye servants of His that do His pleasure.*'

Address V.

THE MINISTRY OF ST. MICHAEL.

WE now pass on to consider angelic ministry more in detail. There are two angelic personalities prominent in Holy Scripture—St. Michael and St. Gabriel—each with his own special and appointed ministry. In our present meditation we will confine ourselves to the contemplation of the ministry of St. Michael.

I. Notice the features of his ministry—the strife with Satan: '*Michael and his Angels fought against the*

dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels. And, again, St. Jude tells us that St. Michael contended with the devil, disputing ‘*about the body of Moses.*’ He appears as the advocate and champion of Israel against the malice of Satan : as the Angel of the Lord : the Guardian Angel of the Chosen People.

It is almost certain from the early verses of Rev. xii. that the Incarnation was the subject of this war and strife. Hence it is probable that the Incarnation and the thought of It was the ground and origin of Satan’s rebellion,—his envy of man because of the honour conferred by God upon human nature : ‘*He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.*’

II. Hence we find especial malice on the part of Satan directed against the Incarnate Lord. We may see this in his moving Herod to seek the Young Child’s life, and later in the Temptation in the Wilderness, and in the Agony in Gethsemane.

III. This malice is perpetuated against the Church of the Redeemed. So in Rev. xii. 17, he . . . ‘*was wroth, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*’ So also in the song of the angels : ‘*The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. . . . Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea ! for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*’

This, then, is the great characteristic of St. Michael’s ministry as revealed in Holy Scripture. He is the great champion of the Redeemed in the strife with Satan : ‘*Michael and his Angels fought (and still fight) against the dragon.*’ Such is the groundwork of our Meditation.

The special point to be considered is The Protection of the Tempted. In time of temptation there is great assurance of God's care and protection. As we fear the evil angels, so He would have us trust the good Angels.

(a) Surely we may count upon the assistance of St. Michael and his Angels in our strife with Satan. They fight for us against the dragon. Remember how in the Agony in the Garden *'there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him'* at the very moment when most He needed it; or, again, how after the Temptation and the Fast in the Wilderness *'angels came and ministered unto Him.'*

(b) Never regard the overcoming of temptation as an impossibility: *'They that be with us are more than they which be with them.'* Even in the case of an inveterate and long-standing temptation or tendency it *can* be subdued: *'He shall give His Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways'*; *'Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet.'*

(c) The final overthrow of the Tempter is certain: *'The dragon fought and his angels, AND PREVAILED NOT.'* This is an earnest to us of the final overthrow of the Evil One and his eternal retention in the bottomless pit: *'The lake that burneth with fire and brimstone'*; *'prepared for the Devil and his angels.'* Here we must hope more and more to be conquerors over temptation, remembering that in Paradise temptation will have passed away for ever, and that, however grievous temptation may be to us here, *'no torment shall touch'* us there. There, God grant, we shall render perfect and unhindered Service before the Throne with Angels and Archangels and with all the

Company of Heaven. There shall we ourselves be as the Angels of God, when with them we *'shall see His face.'* *'Thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

Address VI.

THE MINISTRY OF ST. GABRIEL.

THERE is another Angelic Being whose personality is emphasised in Holy Scripture, and whose ministry is specified—viz., St. Gabriel. Dr. Lee (on Rev. xiv.) observes 'that as St. Michael is the type of the Holy Angels in their strife with Satan, so St. Gabriel represents the ministries of Angels to man.' We may see the truth of this distinction.

I. In the Book of Daniel more than once the Angel Gabriel is sent to the prophet, while in the same book St. Michael is referred to as carrying on the work of God in other ways (See Dan. viii. 16, ix. 21-23, x. 13, 21).

II. We are probably more familiar with St. Gabriel's missions mentioned in the New Testament: (a) As bearing the glad but astonishing message to Zacharias, so astonishing as to cause the aged priest to doubt: *'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God: and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.'* (b) And still more remarkably, it is St. Gabriel who announces to the Blessed Virgin the mystery of the Holy Incarnation. It is very noteworthy that St. Michael strives with Satan on the subject of the Incarnation (Rev. xii.), and that St. Gabriel announces the fact to man: *'Fear not,*

Mary, for thou hast found favour with God.' St. Gabriel then represents Angelic Ministries to man.

(1) In illuminating the understanding: '*I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding*' (Dan. ix. 21). Again in verse 23: '*I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.*' May we not hope and believe that it may be the same for us, that in perplexity or doubt God will reveal the mysteries of His Divine Purpose and Will to us?—'*I am come to show thee.*'

(2) In strengthening and comforting the heart of man.

(a) Think of the protection afforded in peril and distress by Angels to Jacob, to St. Joseph, to St. Peter, to St. Paul. Remember the consolation in heaviness and sorrow brought by St. Gabriel to Daniel: '*My sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength*' (Dan. x. 16). And then in verse 19: '*And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened . . . thou hast strengthened me.*'

(b) Or, again, think how God has chosen them to be the means of communication between Himself and man: the channels of spiritual mercies and blessings, especially in the instances of Zacharias and the Blessed Mother of the Lord, or of St. Joseph: '*Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.*'

(c) Think also how they brought strength and support to our Lord in His Agony, when His soul was '*exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*'; '*There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.*' May it not be so in our case also?—'*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*'

Let us gather up these considerations under one special point—The Great Condition of Angelic Succour. And we gather from Holy Scripture that this condition is *prayer*. It is almost invariably the case that where in Holy Scripture there is a record of angelic ministry to man, we find it associated with prayer, and times of prayer, and answers to prayer. Prayer to God draws out and brings to our aid these holy messengers. Take as examples: Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 24); Daniel (in chapter ix. 21); Zacharias in the Temple (St. Luke i. 11); the Blessed Virgin, as in traditional pictures, kneeling in prayer when the angel Gabriel comes in to her (St. Luke i. 28); to St. Peter (Acts xii. 5-10); our Blessed Lord Himself, as in St. Luke xxii. 43.

Are we not only too conscious of weariness, irregularity, and want of perseverance in our prayers? Is it a real difficulty and a trial to us? Remember Elisha and his servant: ‘*Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see . . . and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots round about Elisha.*’ So, we may be certain, are the Hosts of the Lord round about the praying soul. In times of desolation and weariness and spiritual struggle try to think of Jacob ‘wrestling,’ or our Blessed Lord praying ‘*more earnestly.*’ Only persevere, and Angels shall come to thee: ‘*They shall bear thee in their hands.*’

Call to mind once more the fact that in the Holy Eucharist we join ourselves in our worship with Angels and Archangels. The thought of their presence with us, joining in our worship, rejoicing in our repentance, renders many a sweet communion especially blessed, and is a thought full of comfort after some wherein, possibly, we have found but dryness and trouble. Has it not been

with us at times, as with the patriarch Jacob? We have awaked out of sleep and re-echoed his words: '*Surely the Lord is in this place . . . this is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.*'

Persevere, then, in prayer; be careful in preparation for Holy Communion. Angels will help thee, Angels will strengthen thee: '*I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God: and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings*'; '*He shall give His Angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*'

Address VII.

THE ANGELIC EXAMPLE.

WE come now to the consideration of the example set by the Holy Angels to man. And it is a great example: as great on the side of good, as the warning against the example of the Evil Angels is great against rebellion and disobedience to the Will of God.

This is an important spiritual truth, for the Holy Angels, in this respect, in the Divine dispensation, fulfil a special office, and their example is in a sense unique. Our Blessed Lord, of course, affords us the perfect Example we are to follow. His Nature was both Divine and Human, a bodily Nature and a spiritual Nature, and He was perfect in both: '*Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.*'

The Saints reflect His Image, and in their measure are a pattern and a help to us also. They are examples (as our Blessed Lord could not be) of what Grace may do upon

sinful human nature: '*Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*'

But the Holy Angels as spiritual beings are especially an example to us in the spiritual development of our nature, influencing our nature not as our Lord does universally, but partially, not so much in the life of the flesh, but as regards the life of the spirit: '*Thy Will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*' Let us enlarge upon this. Take three instances of angelic example to the spirit of man:

1. Conformity of will to the Will of God. The Psalmist bids us notice this characteristic: '*Ye that fulfil His commandments and hearken unto the voice of His words.*' Our Lord, again, in the words quoted above: '*Thy Will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*'

2. Their unselfish interest in man. This is a remarkable feature in the angelic character. They strive for man against Satan; they minister God's gifts to man; they rejoice in man's redemption, in his repentance, in his triumph: '*Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. . . . Therefore, rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.*' And this is all the more remarkable because man, by the Incarnation, is raised above the Angels, yet the Angels unselfishly rejoice in his exaltation: '*Thou madest him a little lower than the angels to crown him with glory and worship.*'

3. Notice their perfect seeking of God's glory. We find this in all that is recorded of their worship and adoration: '*All the angels stood round about the Throne . . .*

and fell before the Throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.' The same is recorded of their ministry: 'Ye servants of His that do His pleasure'; 'Sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation'; never thinking of their own glory, but of His Who sends them forth. What a lesson to us in the spiritual life—to seek only God's glory in worship and work, that 'God in all things may be glorified'! What a lesson to us, again, to take interest in others, and not to concentrate our interests on ourselves alone: 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.'

Let us sum up our Meditation under this one point—the Example of Unselfishness. Can you not gain help from this Retreat in aiming at truer self-forgetfulness in the future; in going out of yourselves, not allowing yourselves to dwell on grievances and slights, real or imaginary; forgetting self; thinking of others with truer sympathy; in gratitude to God Who has poured out His love upon you when He '*made Himself of no reputation*'? Can you not try to be more like the Holy Angels, who rejoice over others' good, never envying or grudging them God's favour? Can you not try to give up taking pleasure in hearing others disparaged or evil-spoken of; yielding readily the first place, the ungrudging praise, the free, candid acknowledgment of merit without the slightest attempt at detraction or insinuation by word or look? What labours, what journeys, what trouble the Holy Angels take for us, simply out of love and obedience and willing service! May we not learn from them to '*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*'

'Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.'

Thus shall you be overcoming vainglory and self-seeking, that God only *'may be glorified,'* yourselves only instruments in His Hands: *'Behold the handmaid of the Lord'*; laying aside selfish motives, that, like His Angels, you may give *'blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'*

Address VIII.

THE ANGELIC EXAMPLE IN LIFE AND CONVERSATION.

LET us now consider a special feature of the angelic character, which is of great practical interest, set before us also very distinctly in Holy Scripture for our example—their freedom from all censorious speaking. St. Peter, *e.g.*, referring to the immoral life of certain men, says: *'Angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord'*; and, again, St. Jude, in a passage to which I have referred before, says: *'Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.'*

These passages are remarkable, calling our attention, as they do, to the utter abstinence or restraint on the part of Angels from censoriousness and evil-speaking. Can we assign any reason for this? It probably arises from fear of presumption, from fear of a loss of humility, the sin which had been the origin of the fall of Satan. Both the

passages quoted above refer to 'speaking evil,' and that from St. Peter also to presumptuousness and self-will: '*Speak not evil one of another.*'

Let us then, take for our present consideration the thought of Censorious Speaking and all reckless assertion or exaggeration, without certainty of the truth spoken, as in the habit of gossip, slander, and ill-will. They '*speaking evil of things they understand not*'; or repeating unnecessarily and maliciously things that are true, but which are better left unsaid. Such habits betoken an unloving spirit, no matter whether we have suffered injury from any one or whether we are giving way to mere dislike. We are especially bidden to lay '*aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.*'

The secret source from which such habits spring is pride, and the love of the exaltation of self. Self-exaltation is necessarily implied in all censoriousness, and is not only unkind to others, but it injures our own character: '*Presumptuous are they, self-willed.*' Pride is fostered, and humility is marred by evil-speaking. Self-restraint in word is of the greatest importance: '*If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*' '*By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*'; '*For he that would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.*'

Address IX.

THE ANGELIC EXAMPLE IN DEVOTION.

ONE more aspect of the angelic example remains for our consideration—Their example to us in worship and devotion, a useful and fitting subject as our Retreat closes. Let us, then, contemplate their ceaseless and perfect devotion. What a guide, what a pattern, what encouragement may we find here amid all the difficulties and distractions of our own poor worship, with which we are so familiar! Think for a moment or two of the worship of the Angels as brought before us in Holy Scripture—*e.g.*, in Isaiah vi. 3: ‘*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.*’ Or again, in Rev. iv. 8: ‘*They rest not day and night saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come.*’ Or again, as in Rev. vii. 11, where the angels are represented as falling ‘*before the Throne on their faces,*’ worshipping God in the words, ‘*Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever!*’ In all these passages, and in others besides, we see at once the spirit of the angelic worship—no thought of self; God, the one dominant thought in all.

Further, we may note also the great subject of the angelic praise in Rev. v. 12: ‘*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*’ This is very remarkable. The angelic worship as represented here is practically

a Eucharist for the Sacrifice of Christ. The Sacrifice for which the Church of the Redeemer gives thanks forms the bond of union in worship for the Church on earth, and the Angelic choirs in heaven. No wonder, then, that at the offering of the Holy Sacrifice the Church bids us join our worship with that of 'Angels and Archangels and all the Company of heaven (as) we laud and magnify God's glorious Name.' May we not find in such thoughts as these some help and instruction in learning how to worship?

I. Take the reverent and undistracted worship of the Angels. Notice their attitude of adoration—they '*fell before the Throne on their faces,*' worshipping with undiverted gaze—an example to us who are bidden to '*glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*'

Distractions in prayer are a great trial to some devout minds. How should they be met? There must, of course, be (1) a constant aim and effort in the control and command of self in thought, in feeling, in word, and action. (2) Watchful preparation of the heart for worship is very important; carefulness in little things, watching against pre-occupation, deferring the reading of letters, avoiding ordinary and unnecessary conversation just before and just after times of prayer. Little rules like this help us to the 'recollectedness' that is so necessary for those who are entering or leaving God's especial Presence. (3) Ejaculatory prayer is very helpful; it does so much to maintain the upward look of the soul that should be characteristic of a child of God: '*Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord.*'

II. The unselfishness of the Angels' worship. It is very significant to note that they never ask anything for them-

selves, or appear even to think of themselves. How different from our prayers!—selfish too often, often too subjective. Oh, that we could think more of God's will and of God's glory, and of the truths of our most Holy Faith, of the mercy, the power, the beauty, and majesty of Almighty God—'*Holy, Holy, Holy . . . Which was, and is and is to come!*' How better can we strive to act, as we pray, '*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven?*'

III. Take another thought—The Eucharistic adoration of the Angels: '*Worthy is the Lamb.*' May we not find here lessons suggestive to us for use in our Eucharistic worship? (a) The preparation of purity and self-cleansing from sin. (b) The preparation of humility, the humbling of the soul before God, apart from any selfish desire for comfort and peace. They '*fell on their faces before the Throne.*' (c) Recollection of the Presence of God, and of all the soul owes to Him: '*Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.*'

IV. Once more, think of the utter self-surrender and self-dedication of the Angels. They give themselves wholly to Him, casting their crowns before Him in entire self-surrender and self-dedication. Can you not find here an example which you may do well to follow, whatever be your appointed lot or place in life, as you say to Him, '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord?*'

God grant that henceforth your life and worship may be found more after the pattern of the Holy Angels, training yourselves for future fellowship with them in the Presence of God and of the Lamb. Even here in the Holy Communion may we each one realise their unseen fellowship, and derive hidden strength from it, that hereafter, in

the Beatific Vision and in the adoration of the Lamb, we may be allowed to blend with the Angels our increasing chant of praise: *‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.’ ‘Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.’ Amen.*



Addresses given at a Retreat
for Associates, held at All Hallows,
Ditchingham, June 27-30, 1898.*

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

WE are gathered together for a season of Retreat. Let us endeavour to enter on this season of grace with fitting dispositions, listening to words which the Lord will speak: '*I will hearken unto what the Lord God will say concerning me.*' We may ask the question, How shall we prepare ourselves for it? So much depends upon the preparation. The heart must be opened to receive the inspirations of grace; obstacles of sin or worldliness must be removed; there must be a real and earnest desire for grace. The Holy Spirit comes in answer to the desire. Where there is no thought or desire, then He comes not; when the soul is anxious, then He will come. If we only have desires, He will grant them: '*I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.*' We must be athirst: '*Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*' It may help us to-night, in endeavouring to prepare, if we

* See Preface.

call to mind and bring before ourselves some of the seasons of Retreat to which our Lord called His disciples. A Retreat is not a modern invention. Our Lord often gathered His disciples together for a time of retirement or Retreat.

One occasion will occur to us at once—our Lord calling His Apostles in these words: ‘*Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile,*’—summoning them to His side. Further, it is interesting to notice that on occasions like these the special purpose was spiritual instruction: ‘*When they were alone He expounded all things to His disciples.*’ So with us in our Retreat. One great purpose is spiritual instruction. We must be alone with our Lord, listening to His Holy Spirit.

Let me ask you to think of the Retreat in that light, as a season of spiritual instruction. We dwell under the influence and shadow of the Holy Spirit. We desire His teaching and guidance. Some may have perplexities in their daily life as to what they should do. Often it is impossible for us to solve these difficulties. We need the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our faith is sometimes tried, and no human light can enlighten us. Or it may be not only perplexity or mystery, but sorrow or anxiety. Here our purpose is to seek and to listen: ‘*Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee.*’ That is one purpose of a Retreat—not *human* instruction, but *spiritual* instruction,—that we may gain the counsels of the Spirit.

We will pass on to another sacred Retreat—the Transfiguration—a Retreat with His three chosen Apostles. St. Peter looked back to that Retreat as ‘*the time when we were with Him on the holy mount.*’ Surely we shall say also: ‘*It is good for us to be here.*’ We shall be sorry

when the visions pass away, and we have to come back into the daily life and take up its interests. We ought to be able to look back in after-years to the time when we were with Him. Let us call to mind the narrative, and trace the special purpose of that Retreat '*on the holy mount.*' It was a revelation of the glory that should follow upon suffering:—'*The decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem*'; '*He was transfigured before them: and His Face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.*' That purpose has a meaning for us; it teaches us to take a right view of suffering. It must be sanctified, and then it will transfigure and purify.

Then there is another point we may recollect. I mean the blessedness of the solitude of being alone with Jesus: '*They saw no man any more save Jesus only.*' Here we are gathered together not to enter into conversation or to meet socially. We turn away from everyone. We see '*Jesus only.*' Not conversing, not meeting as friends, seeing no one, communing with no one, but '*Jesus only.*' That is the reason of silence. The heart puts aside all cares and interests, to be unoccupied, to have '*Jesus only*': '*Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still.*' The Transfiguration teaches us how to pass a season of Retreat. Meditate upon this, and catch the spirit of the Retreat.

Let us look at another;—the last Retreat of our Lord with His disciples, the Retreat in the upper chamber. The addresses are given in St. John's Gospel, Chapters xiv.-xvii. They are full of spiritual teaching for us. Recall the tenor of those addresses. You will find two lines of thought running through them.

I. The repeated promise of consolation, the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Guide: '*I will not leave you comfort-*

less, I will come unto you.' Our Lord was instituting the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

II. Another line of thought: the great warning and the great testing of the spiritual condition, the mention of the forsaking, the denial, and the betrayal. These lines run through the Retreat. Let us not forget that a Retreat is a time for searching into ourselves—not with too much self-introspection, but going calmly and deeply into our own spiritual state. 'Alone with Jesus,' that we may know more of ourselves, more of Him. Further, as a fruit of a Retreat, we should endeavour to have a deeper sense of sin, a more earnest desire for the cleansing from sin, and the eternal realities of the life to come. It should deepen our sense of sin and the reality of our confessions, and thus prove our repentance. There are great consolations to the penitent. In Him there shall be peace; '*sorrow shall be turned into joy,*' transforming us. '*Ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you;*' more and more of that perfect union with Him: '*I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*' You might find it useful to think over these three Retreats in the sacred narrative—(1) in the desert place; (2) on the Mount of Transfiguration (the blessedness of being alone with Jesus); (3) in the upper room.

Just before I close let me mention the general subject of the Retreat. At the end of the week comes one of the festivals of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We will take her as our subject—The Pattern of True Womanhood in her Life of Obedience, her Life of Humility, her Life of Sacrifice. We may hope each in our different Vocations to find what will help us: '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*'

One word on the importance of a resolution. There should be one in reference to our daily life—a practical one. Seek for it some special duty; let it be definite. And then another as regards our devotional life. We all know our weak points. Think over your weak point. It may be your morning prayers—the private morning prayers which set the tone to the whole life. If these are neglected the whole life is weakened. It is presumptuous to enter the house of the Lord unprepared. Or it may be your mid-day prayers, or your preparation for your Communions.

May the Holy Spirit be with us and fulfil our desires according to our needs! May He *‘preach good tidings unto the meek . . . bind up the broken-hearted; . . . proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound,’* and *‘proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,’* so that we may be called *‘trees of righteousness’* and be fruitful in every good work. If we try to purify ourselves and kindle our desires, the Holy Spirit will come down into our souls and give us the very influence that we need: *‘He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool: even as the drops that water the earth.’*

Address I.

THE LIFE OF OBEDIENCE.

LAST evening you may remember that I was proposing as our subject the Blessed Virgin as the pattern of true womanhood under three aspects: (1) The Life of Obedience; (2) the Life of Humility; (3) the Life of Sacrifice.

The Life of Obedience: Tracing this in the Blessed

Virgin's character, we will take the Annunciation—and her response to the Angel which declares her immediate self-surrender. *'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.'* May we learn, after her example, to be forthwith obedient to all the inspirations and commands which may come to us now or at any other time, so that His gracious purpose may be fulfilled in our lives.

We may notice first this fact—that in her words of response to the Angel (if we look carefully) we see all the principles of true obedience. (1) The self-surrender. She had grasped the great principle, the great aim of all who will be united to Him—the consecration of the whole life. *'Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.'* (2) Another element—the conformity of the will: *'Be it unto me according to thy word.'* And we may say, further, that this is the culminating point of the spiritual life. At the close of our Blessed Lord's life, as His character had developed, it was then that He uttered those words, *'Not My will but Thine be done,'* the expression of perfect conformity of will. These are two elements out of the three: The surrender of self; conformity of will. (3) One other element is involved besides these two—perfect trustfulness in God. He to Whom we give ourselves that He may lead us is One Whom we may completely trust. The soul trusts itself to God in perfect confidence, knowing that He is all love and all wisdom, and that His will is far better and wiser than our will, and that He is all powerful, so that though a great struggle is involved, yet the omnipotent power of God is with us. While we trust His love and wisdom we can lean upon Him. Think over these three main elements.

Now let us pass on from this outline and fix our minds on one or two points suggested to us by these thoughts.

I. There comes before us the need of absoluteness in our obedience. It must be entire, without reserve. This is the condition of all Christian life, whether in the Religious Life, where the entireness of obedience is expressed in the absolute consecration of the whole life, or in those who are called to some special work, such as nursing or mission work. Whatever work we take up for God, it must be taken up in absolute obedience. The same in society. It is possible in the midst of an evil world to live a life of perfect obedience, giving God the supreme place, everything else being subordinate. This principle runs through all vocations. Our obedience must be absolute and perfect in its kind. It is well for us, dear Sisters, to think of this in our Retreat, because one of the most subtle temptations is that we should yield half-hearted obedience. Sometimes unconsciously, through our earthly affections or interests, which usurp the first place in our hearts, we make our obedience to God half-hearted: '*Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*' Both cannot be supreme. Which shall we make supreme? It is useful to think over, and take a general review of life in times of Retreat, and ask ourselves how far we have been following God's will perfectly. Our obedience, has it been divided? Unless we are very careful, self will usurp the place of God. What influence has self-will had in our lives? How far have our affections come between ourselves and God? How far have the cares and interests and sorrows of the world been allowed to occupy our hearts and shut out the will of God? How far have they hindered us? As our Blessed Lord warned His Apostles, even sorrow can fill and occupy our hearts, as well as pleasure and enjoyment.

How far has your obedience been divided? If you should discover anything that has tended to divide your obedience, note it, and resolve for the future to overcome it. *'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word,'* so that you may place yourself absolutely at His disposal.

II. Let us pursue our meditation another step—a very useful point to dwell upon. At the bottom of our imperfect obedience there lies some secret fault, which has more power over us than we know. Such a secret fault or sin will always disarrange the whole life. It breaks up our perfect obedience. Some sin like envy, or some secret dislike, some temper, some self-will, or some secret sin of the flesh, binding us and driving away the Spirit of God. Or it may be some sin partly of the flesh and partly of the spirit, such as sloth, a very common and a very subtle danger which tends to undermine the whole character. The whole life suffers. Our duties are only half fulfilled because of the undisciplined will. How often our devotions are slackened by our being slothful, by our not stirring ourselves up sufficiently!

III. It would be a useful line of thought to consider how far the sin of sloth has hindered us, so that we might be able to take as another point how far secret sins have been at the root of our shortcomings. *'Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults.'* This shows us the great importance of our Confessions. If we look at ourselves, we find hindrances within which we have not searched into. Confession tends to place our life on a higher level, and enables us to go forward, and teaches us to be thorough. We should go calmly and thoughtfully over our faults, so that we may obtain absolution; freedom; power over ourselves; and find grace to sin no more.

IV. Let us take another point—a trustful spirit. We all need to trust in the sufficiency of His mercy to forgive, and in the power of His help. There is no greater hindrance than despondency. If we give ourselves up to despair, there is no energy left. ‘*Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.*’ Whatever may have been our sins, our faults, as we feel their oppression, remember that every discovered sin should be a stimulant to help us to say, ‘I will sin no more.’ It should lead us to more energy, trusting in His strength, His love, and His wisdom.

V. Another feature should be a cheerful obedience. Spiritual cheerfulness does not depend upon natural high spirits. There is a Christian cheerfulness which does not depend upon natural spirits, but is a habit gained; it is a duty, and it is of the very greatest importance. Where there is no cheerfulness then there is morbidness and despondency. How important this is for others! What a difference it makes to those among whom we live, especially to the young! How often others are discouraged by the lack of cheerfulness in ourselves! We may find it also a very useful discipline. We must rise above despondency. Is it not very remarkable how our Lord speaks of joy amid suffering?

As, then, we think of this trustful spirit and the need of struggling against despondency, let us learn more and more confidence, and leave our future in the hands of God. There will be times when the future is dark and uncertain; some fear or perplexity will come to you; but you must discipline yourselves, casting yourselves on Him. Whatever may come, if you are in the hands of God you are safe: ‘*Casting all your care upon Him.*’ Nothing can hurt you. Yet, have we not known souls who have harassed them-

selves about the future?—‘*I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.*’ If we ever attempt to keep our cares to ourselves we shall be sure to fail; but if we cast them upon God we need fear no evil: ‘*Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He will bring it to pass*’; ‘*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.*’

Remember then, (1) The need of perfectness in your obedience; (2) the hindrance of secret sins; (3) the need of trustfulness—perfect confidence about the future. Make the words of the Blessed Virgin your own: ‘*Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.*’

Address II.

OBEDIENCE IN THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE.

WE were considering this morning the Life of Obedience as illustrated in the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin. We were dwelling on sin as the cause of an imperfect obedience, and, lastly, on the need of trustfulness. We will pass on this afternoon to another department of her life—the Purification in the Temple—the obedience illustrated there being devotional obedience. She made her humble offering. You will remember what a special stress is laid on this act of obedience. The words ‘the Law of the Lord’ are repeated over and over again. We may take, then, the subject of Obedience in respect of the Devotional Life, and as we fill in the outline, it may be useful to dwell on two points.

I. Obedience as the real stay and strength of the

devotional life. Amid constant change of feelings and circumstances, devotion must be grounded on loving obedience. We must remember that circumstances are uncertain, and we often feel ourselves affected by the circumstances in which we are placed. It may happen, for instance, that we worship at an altar where all is beautiful. These helps may be withdrawn, and we find the altar rude and bare. How often such a change as this affects people! And then devotion ceases or becomes formal. The devotional spirit should be maintained wherever we may be.

II. Another point. It is useful to inquire what place *feelings* ought to occupy in the Devotional Life. They have some place—an important place; they are given us sometimes as a season of refreshment: ‘*O how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord.*’ The Psalmist was stirred by warm feelings. It is a great help to have warm and fervent feelings besides the obedience. But though this is true, we must be careful to remember that feelings are only one side. Devotion may sometimes become too emotional or sensational. If such feelings go too far, then we may be sure that they will not be certain or lasting. Our devotion will become sentiment, and ritual will be a mere æstheticism. We must have the calm spirit of obedience—‘*the Law of the Lord*’; we must be on our guard, lest our devotion should be built on sand and not on the rock of obedience and perseverance. ‘*In the evening, and morning, and at noonday will I pray, and that instantly,*’ says the Psalmist. Notice the regularity. Such, then, is the outline of our Meditation: Obedience, and Feelings in their proper place.

As we dwell on this aspect of our subject—of Obedience

in respect to the Devotional Life—there are one or two points on which to fix our minds.

I. Rules of devotion. Rule is the outward expression of obedience. Obedience, like a sacrament, has two parts: the outward part is rule; the inward part virtue and power. It is very important that we should be regular. Our morning devotions especially so often suffer. Rise sufficiently early to have a fixed time. Every important duty in ordinary things must have its proper time. Our devotions will never be permanent unless *they* have *their* fixed time. They must not be put aside; they must have the first place. Hurried prayers are disrespectful; they show that we do not realise the Majesty of God.

II. Another thing worth noticing when we speak of rule and regulation is that when we endeavour to be regular, we are forming a moral and spiritual force in the character. It certainly helps on our earnestness, and also helps on another force—recollectedness. We often complain of distractions in prayer. It is very difficult, sometimes impossible, to get rid of distraction. Before we can hope to be recollected, we must be regular. We must not hope for it all at once: first regularity, then recollectedness. I would say further, on the subject of distractions, that one of the many hindrances to our prayers is disinclination. Our safeguard and remedy is taking pains and doing our best, whatever the hindrance may be; then we may rest assured that if we take pains God will accept our prayers. God knows our infirmities; He only wants us to do what we can.

III. This brings us to another point—the subject of Perseverance in Devotion. This is of more importance than feelings. We have seasons of disinclination and of depression sometimes which seem to give a shock to all our

devotions, but it is helpful to remember that we must persevere. Our Lord always, when speaking of prayer, turns upon the point of perseverance. It is an effort of will. We cannot control the circumstances of life, but we can persevere: ‘*Shall not God avenge His Own elect, which cry day and night before Him?*’

It is important for us to remember this, for it is so easy to be weighed down. Remember, then, that there is a very great encouragement connected with these trials. How often they become blessings! If your devotion rests too much on feelings, then it is almost certain that your devotional life will become superficial; but if you have to struggle and persevere through difficulties, then you get a much stronger hold of the devotional life. If only we are faithful we become stronger. As the Apostle tells us, we are to ‘*pray without ceasing*’—that means under all circumstances.

And so we may take these two points: (1) The importance of rule in devotion; (2) the blessedness of perseverance. It may encourage us when we are weighed down by coldness that at the last we shall, above all the variations and changes of our own feelings, ‘*be set upon the Rock that is higher than I.*’

Address III.

THE CHRISTIAN'S INFLUENCE IN SOCIETY.

WE have considered Obedience in the Life and Obedience in respect to Worship. There is yet another aspect—Our Duty to others, our Influence, our Example. Those who

have learned conformity to the will of God can help to guide others by influence, example, and counsel. Thus they become lights in the world, manifestations of Jesus. The Scriptures record an instance of this obedience. We recall the words spoken at the marriage feast at Cana : ‘ *Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*’ The Blessed Virgin had learned conformity, and now seeks to impress it upon others. She had received what seemed almost like a refusal. She had been reminded by our Lord that now He had passed beyond her control, but she acquiesced in the Divine commands cheerfully. She could say this now, because she had done it herself : ‘ *Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it unto me according to thy word*’ ; and out of her own experience she could give the counsel : ‘ *Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*’

Such, then, is our subject. Let us gather up some of the points under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I. Notice this—that the occasion was very significant ; the words were spoken at a social gathering. This leads us to think a little of society. What a scope for example ! Christian society is in great need of purification. We want brave and quiet souls, who will be brave for the Master’s sake.

II. Then there must be moral courage. We must not be ashamed to say before others, ‘ *Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*’ If in society we come across any contradiction of our Lord’s teaching, let us show by our look that we disapprove. It is a very difficult grace, but still, with the help of our Lord, we can do more than we think, and be brave for His Sake.

III. Another thing : not only courage, but a quiet and humble spirit is needed. Putting ourselves in a superior position will not do. We must have gentleness and

quietness. Our best efforts are often marred by the want of this quietness of spirit. We must be balanced. All firmness will never do; all gentleness will never do: the two must be blended. Combine these two graces, and we shall find that we can do something towards raising social life. And, besides firmness and gentleness, we must have prayer. Perhaps we do not pray enough. Neither firmness nor gentleness will be of avail without intercession. How much we might do if we would try in some little measure to follow the Blessed Virgin's example! It has been noted that the whole tone of a neighbourhood has been changed, and purified by the example of one or two: '*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*'

IV. Another point—what is the real power of our social influence? It is this—the example of our lives. The Blessed Virgin spoke with authority, because she was absolutely obedient. Not fault-finding—that will not help without love or without example, for without personal holiness we shall never win. It is also bad for our own characters if we are always finding fault with others. So we must be careful that it is not so much our words as our lives: '*Let your light so shine before men*'—quiet, silent, shining like lights, illuminating and at last transfiguring the lives of others. Our influence on others generally consists in the unconscious example of personal holiness, when we know it not. It is well to bear this in mind, because we may err in imagining that we have influence. The most mighty power is unconscious. It is always dangerous to dwell on supposed influence.

V. One step higher. Let us think of the hidden Source of this influence—our close union with our Lord, ever becoming deeper and deeper: '*He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*' His life

‘*manifest in our mortal bodies.*’ As we seek to deepen more and more our own union with Him, then the power of His life in us will influence others: ‘*The life of Jesus manifest in our mortal bodies.*’

We must take great care of all that appertains to personal holiness. We are unfitted for the Sacraments, if we are not seeking personal holiness in union with Jesus, or if we are neglecting devotion for good works. Never let devotion be crowded out. It is better to do a little less work, if it outcrowds devotion.

We have dwelt this evening upon: (1) Our duties as Christians in society; (2) the Real Power of Christian influence; (3) the Source of Christian influence. The Psalmist describes such a life: ‘*He shall be like a tree planted by the water-side: that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither: and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper.*’

Let us all seek to influence others by drinking in His Life quietly; thus the fruits of the Holy Ghost will be ripening in us day by day.

Address IV.

THE LIFE OF HUMILITY.

YESTERDAY we were dwelling on the Life of Obedience as illustrated in the Blessed Virgin’s character. Let us pass on to-day to another feature of her life—its central characteristic, the Life of Humility. This feature pervades her whole life—at the Annunciation, at the Visita-

tion, in the Temple at her Purification, and in the resignation at the Cross on Calvary. And as we endeavour to think of this Life of Humility, we will select three aspects: (1) As illustrated in the Lowly Home; (2) Under Reproof; (3) In her Quiet Meditation.

The Lowly Home at Nazareth. It was there that the Angel found her; it was thither that she returned after her sojourn in Egypt; a very obscure village; the inhabitants a low and degraded race. The village was hardly noticed, and when noticed, was despised. It is not even named in the Old Testament, nor is it referred to by Josephus. Think of the reproachful question of Nathanael: '*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?*' Yet in such a village it was that the Blessed Virgin was content to dwell. Though the circumstances of the Annunciation had so changed her life, yet the lowliness of her character remained untouched. She still made the village her home.

In endeavouring to select some special points, we may take—

I. The Retired Life. One feature of all true womanhood, this spirit of retirement. The tendencies of the day are in an opposite direction. The life of women is lived much more in the glare of the world. It is inevitable in modern society. There is so much more scope for woman's work, but it is attended with very great danger to the womanly character—a danger that is very subtle. We inhale, as it were, this spirit of publicity, and the tone of womanhood is unconsciously but inevitably affected by it. It tends to mar quietness and modesty. The danger cannot always be avoided, but every soul must be on its guard against this spirit of publicity, this tendency to push self forward, which must lower the life of

true womanhood: '*Our life is hid with Christ in God.*' The unique position of the life of the Blessed Virgin does not hinder her from being an example to us whose lives are spent so differently, so that we are justified in looking on her as a pattern for all ages.

II. Let us pass to another point: The Unselfish Spirit in the Home Life. What an important point for thought, reflection, and prayer!—the need of an unselfish spirit in our home life. You may sometimes find your lot cast among those who are uncongenial to you. There are few families where there is not some real trial of this kind. The Blessed Virgin had to meet it among our Lord's brethren: '*Neither did His brethren believe in Him.*' Uncongenial dispositions in religious matters, varying ideas of faith and worship, are not altogether an evil, for if we meet them aright they may be turned into a blessing. Here are opportunities of lowliness, of forbearance, or for unselfishness and trustfulness. We may turn the trial into a real blessing, not only to others, but to our own character, training it in Christian virtues.

III. This brings us to another form of unselfishness—Real Sympathy, putting ourselves into the position of others: '*He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*' We must learn to put ourselves more and more aside, and think of the feelings of others, the younger to be subject to the wishes of the elder, the elder to be considerate to the younger. This consideration for the feelings of others is often a very material help to our own life. We get more power over self. Nothing helps us so much to get above ourselves as to consider and sympathise with others. We may consider, as we dwell on the unselfishness of home life, the willingness to take the lowest

place. Though our Blessed Lord was Lord and Master, yet He made Himself the Servant of all. The willingness to take the lowest place readily, lovingly, and cheerfully, to do the duties that bring no praise and no reward and no notice—this is the characteristic of the greatest saints: ‘*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me*’; ‘*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*’ What a power, what a witness, what an influence is found in the caring nothing for the praise of men, the doing quietly and calmly the work given to us!

IV. Let us take one other point—Vocations, the great vocations that spring out of the home life, as they arise in God’s Providence at the bidding of God. The Blessed Virgin’s high and consecrated destiny was developed at Nazareth. Some of the highest vocations come, or are developed, from the home life. There are some who find themselves free in the home circle. It may seem to them that life has no special work. But a Christian’s life must not be indefinite, nor be wasted. If there is no need of a life in the home circle, then it is called to some special work: ‘*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*’ If the desire is enkindled, and the opportunity is given, then arise and do His will, and finish His work, so that when life ends you may feel that it has not been wasted.

Sometimes the call comes to the Religious Life. One or another is bidden to forsake all, and, like the Blessed Virgin, to consecrate the whole life. It is important neither to put the call aside, nor to take it up hurriedly, but to make it the subject of daily prayer for months and, it may be, for years. It has been, as it were, a Voice speaking to us and within us. Let us rise to it. The call comes from Him, and the time comes from Him. He opens out

the time, and when it comes, then arise at His word and obey.

V. Once again let us consider the ordinary home duties of life, which must never be despised. High types of spiritual life have been matured in the home. Every call is sacred, and the simple duties of home life must be sanctified. It is a work for, and a call of, God. We do not always remember that in the ordinary routine there *is* the work of God, to be sanctified and consecrated to Him. Every sphere has its need and possibility of doing God's will: '*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work*'; '*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.*' Meet every call, fulfil every duty in the spirit that said: '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.*'

Take for your present Meditation these three points: (1) The retired life in the home at Nazareth; (2) the unselfish spirit; (3) the vocations that arise or are developed in the home life. '*From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home*'; '*Learn to show piety at home.*' Is it not true of a Christian home that '*where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them*'?

Address V.

THE LIFE OF TRIAL.

IN tracing the life of humility in the character of the Blessed Virgin we were dwelling on the home at Nazareth, on the unselfish spirit, and on the vocations that arise or

are developed in the home life. We will pass on to consider The Patience of the Blessed Virgin under Reproof and Contradiction.

We can hardly realise all the pain and suffering she had to undergo as our Lord's work drew Him more and more away from home. What pain to part with Him! At each successive stage of suffering and perplexity we see the same humility. Each disappointment, met with perfect self-surrender. We may recall one or two instances of her trial. The question in the Temple: '*Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?*'; and at the marriage feast: '*Woman, what have I to do with thee?*' There was a great mystery of work and life with which she had nothing to do. So, again, pointing to the same separation, leading on to the higher relationship: '*Who is My mother and My brethren? . . . Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.*'

And, besides the changes and separations, we cannot forget what pain she must have endured from the opposition of the world: '*He was despised and rejected of men.*' What a grief to the Mother's heart to know that '*He was despised*'—and to have no power to shelter Him or to comfort Him! So that we may well take for meditation the patience and humility of the Blessed Virgin under reproof and contradiction and the disappointments of her life.

I. Disappointments in our lives. Life often develops so differently from what we had expected. A great desire or love is thwarted: '*When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not!*'

The hopes and desires of early years are thwarted, it may be, so that all of that upon which we leant is removed. Our will is crossed by a higher Will. Or, again, another form of trial, closely allied to the trial of the Blessed Virgin—the breaking up of an old home by the dispensation of God: ‘*Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*’ Or, again, the desertion of friends. The heart is wounded even by those we trusted: ‘*Yea, even Mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted, who did also eat of My bread, hath laid great wait for Me*’; the life is so different from the idea we had formed. However painful these disappointments may be, you must accept them—such is the example of the Blessed Virgin. One caution as to trials. The *natural* effect is to lead on to morbidness and discontent—forms of evil most injurious to the spiritual life. You must take your example from the Blessed Virgin, and call to mind those never-to-be-forgotten words: ‘*Be it unto me according to thy word*’; ‘*What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*’ Only trust Him. He will keep thee in perfect peace: ‘*I know Whom I have believed.*’

II. Let us pass on to another point, still tracing the life of the Blessed Virgin:—

Vexations and Contradictions from those among whom we live. Besides those in our homes, every Christian must have some share of such vexations and contradictions, and, as it is sometimes said, the world is hard with us. Or the complaint is put in a form that must indeed be displeasing to God, and we say that God is dealing hardly with us. Every form of trial deepens and strengthens the spiritual life, if taken aright. It is well to consider our course. How are we to deal with the

trials when we have to live among uncongenial people, when there is a want of interest and sympathy among those amongst whom we move? How shall we meet them? One way is to remember that all such trials may be made opportunities; opportunities of grace. They are trials, and often they are deeply painful; but there is a bright side also. We may learn through them more self-control, forbearance, and trustfulness, and thus attain great grace. There are the two sides—the dark and the bright. Here is a great trial, but here also is an opportunity of following the life of the Divine Master and His Mother, till we attain to that height of charity that our Lord sets before us when He says: *‘Love your enemies. Pray for them that spitefully use you and persecute you.’* We may train ourselves by these contradictions and vexations that we so often deplore.

III. One other point. Another kind of trial is Religious Perplexity. There are times when not men only, but God, seems to be against us; when our Lord seems to turn to us with words of reproof, piercing into the very depths of our being, when we suffer not only the forsaking of the world, but the inner contradiction of the soul. This may be spoken of as religious perplexity. Sometimes it takes the form of doubt, or want of faith, sometimes of murmuring against God. It is necessary to recognise this as a form of trial, and to remember that it is often a discipline or chastisement to the soul. It is well to try and find the reason: *‘Wherefore hidest Thou Thy Face’* from me? Is there any hidden fault or sin that thou shouldst root out? It leads us to look into ourselves and see why and wherefore God is hiding His Face from us. This is one of the blessings of

confession, especially of a first confession. Some secret sin may be marring or spoiling the whole life. If eradicated, it sets the soul free to serve God with a more free and perfect love than before.

I would have you to remember that all these are loving chastisements from God, not mere punishments or taking vengeance. They are intended to lead us away from sin: '*Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.*' Always remember the deep purpose of chastisement—that we may grow stronger and stronger: '*Out of weakness were made strong.*' Do your best, and God will help you. If perplexed, go to the Fountain of Life: '*For with Thee is the well of Life: and in Thy light shall we see light.*' Never lay aside Communion or prayer. Be patient, and God will help and deliver you. As in all trials: '*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.*'

Address VI.

THE NEED OF MEDITATION.

WE were considering the example of the Blessed Virgin under disappointment and under the trial of contradictions and vexations. We will pass on to the third aspect—The Quiet Meditative Spirit of Her Life. This spirit is traced clearly and distinctly in the Scriptures: '*Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*' The Divine Hymn, the *Magnificat*, reveals an acquaint-

ance with the Old Testament history. The verses are taken largely from Hannah's Song of Thanksgiving—not repeated word for word by rote, but drawn out as by one who had meditated upon it.

When her high destiny is revealed to her she dwells at once on God's greatness and mercy, the Divine satisfaction of human needs: '*He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent empty away.*' So as we call to mind these facts we learn two things: her meditative spirit, and her humility in turning away from self-aggrandisement. This is to be the groundwork of our thoughts, and it will suggest one or two points.

I. Dwell on the spiritual danger of a merely outward life. The present age is one marked by great outward activity. The life of women is lived more in publicity—mixed up with outward activity. Worldly amusements and worldly cares are pressing upon you, and you must not forget that they are influencing your spiritual character. You will find yourselves drifting away if you are not careful. This applies not only to worldly duties, but to good works. The outward activity may outrun the spiritual; it may occupy too large a sphere. It is no easy matter to keep the footing sure, and not to be drawn away from the life of spirituality: '*He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me (apart from Me) ye can do nothing.*' No spiritual work can be done apart from Him; fruitful works follow on personal union. Always remember that all forms of spiritual work, if they are to be precious and abiding, must flow out of spiritual life: '*All my fresh springs shall be in Thee.*' Think of these words, and come back to the Fountain of Life. Then, just as we touch on this point, it is useful as a warning to observe the conse-

quences of outward life without spiritual life, without Prayer or Communion. It is this that produces selfish rivalry in good works, self-seeking, wanting to have the credit and praise, unwillingness to let others take the work from us, though they may be able to do it better than we can. This all points to the want of spiritual life. I dare say you have often noticed in a parish that there is a jealousy and rivalry amongst the workers. This is because the work is merely outward, and not undertaken in personal union with our Lord. Every worker is to work for God, and not to seek his or her own glory.

Yet how difficult it is to get above our selfish notions. Why is this? Because we do not pray enough, we do not meditate enough, we do not keep close enough to Him. If our lives are in union with His, then His seeking of the Father's glory will in some measure flow into ours. We must bring our whole nature into harmony with Him. Let us then be careful, as we were saying at the beginning, to preserve a proper proportion between work and devotion. Never, never let devotion be crowded out, or thrust it into the background: '*With Thee is the well of Life.*' Never get apart from God. If there is no life, then there will be no perseverance in the work. That is the first point in the meditative spirit. Let us take another:

II. The practice of meditation—that which creates and increases the meditative spirit. We often find it difficult, yet in every Christian life there should be some practice of meditation. There is the difficulty of concentration of thought; it is often largely our own fault, and comes from the habit of too much light reading—reading that requires no thought, no concentration. It is a habit

we may fall into, but it is one out of which we may rise. Light reading is only to be used as a refreshment.

III. Another point: we should aim at greater simplicity. I think you would find the most useful book a Devotional Commentary. There is one on the Gospels with a preface* by Canon Liddon; there is also Isaac Williams' 'Devotional Commentary.' These will help to create in your minds the meditative spirit. Take a few verses, think over them on your knees, invoking always the Holy Spirit. As you kneel down you might picture to yourselves the circumstances, see what they tell you about God, about yourselves, about sin; not speaking to God as in prayer, but letting God speak to you: '*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law.*' Always bear this in mind: it is to the humbled and prepared heart that He will speak.

Take an example of meditation; *e.g.*, the verses in which our Lord restores His Apostle (St. John xxi. 15-19). How should you set about it? First, on your knees ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His truth. Picture the circumstances—the Sea of Galilee, the Lord meeting the Apostle, the three denials, the three confessions. It is simple and easy to picture the scene. Pass on to say, 'What does the Lord say to *me*?' 'He asks for *my* love, reminds me of *my* denials. He is ready to trust me again. He warns me that I may have to suffer, may have to be guided by another.' Then would follow your response: 'Take, O Lord, my heart, and inspire it with love. I will make my love for Thee more true in future.' Then end with a practical resolution to subdue some form of self-love or sensitiveness. Take also a devotional reso-

* 'Practical Reflections on the Holy Gospels.'

lution to be more ready to take more pains over your morning prayers, or something of the kind.

Think over, then, these two points: (1) The danger of outward work without spirituality; (2) the subject of meditation.

Address VII.

THE LIFE OF SACRIFICE.

WE have been considering the Blessed Virgin's life of humility in some of its aspects: (1) In the lowliness of the home life; (2) the patience under reproof; (3) the meditative spirit.

We will now pass on to the third branch of our subject—The Life of Sacrifice. As we study the Scriptures we are specially conscious of this feature in the life of the Blessed Virgin. The Man of Sorrows required that there should be the *Mater Dolorosa*. The sorrows of her life are constantly recurring: '*A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.*' Her words at the Annunciation seem to recognise the sacrifice to which she would be called: '*Be it unto me according to thy word.*'

In thinking of this we will glance at it from three aspects: (1) The Exile in Egypt; (2) The Sorrow in the Temple; (3) The Sacrifice of the Cross.

The Exile in Egypt. We will take first the life of sacrifice as it is experienced in the world. Herod had sought to '*kill the young Child.*' What sorrow for the Blessed Mother! She accepts it without murmuring; she acquiesces without complaint: '*Be it unto me according to thy*

word' ; she leaves her own home, travelling by night to a distant land, cut off from her own people—a stranger. So to us some great sorrow comes which changes our position or prospects, or brings bereavement or loss of friends ; loss of property, sudden trial, breaking up the home, or making it quite different, involving, perhaps, a sojourn in a strange land—these may come upon any of us. How shall we bear them if they be our lot ? Are we to grow discontented, or shall we accept them, thus turning the sorrow into a willing sacrifice ?—‘ *The Cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it ?*’

Let us pass on to gather up one or two definite points. Here is one that may be helpful to us.

I. The sorrows of life in the world are the material for sacrifice. They give us the opportunity of not only bearing the cross, but also of *taking it up* ; they become the material wherewith to offer a sacrifice. Dwell on this. Any sorrow or trial may be taken up in that spirit and be transformed into a willing sacrifice. We find that we also have ‘ *somewhat to offer.*’ The importance of looking upon sorrow and trial as a sacrifice becomes more and more clear to us. Nothing is so dangerous as a sorrow not looked upon as a sacrifice. It must never be regarded as a mere necessity—something we must put up with. The Christian mind must look upon it from another view. It is a means and an opportunity for sacrifice. So we avoid another danger—a frequent result of sorrow—the tendency to morbidness and discontent ; the looking at things from the dark side, wishing almost to have done with life ; looking only at the gloomy side, saying, like Jacob, ‘ *All these things are against me.*’ (There was more excuse for him. The purpose of suffering

was not so clear then as now.) Or, like Elijah: '*Take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.*' This is to mistake the great purpose of sorrow. We miss the opportunity of offering ourselves as a sacrifice. If we try to realise this more and more, we shall take up sorrow and turn it into a sacrifice: '*Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, so that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad with exceeding joy.*'

II. Let us pass on to another fruit of sorrow as it falls to the Christian in the world. All sorrows and trials are calls to a greater knowledge of ourselves. Self-knowledge is a very great grace, so that as we look back upon our lives it is a useful question to ask, What is the purpose of this burden that has been laid upon me? May it not be that God is calling me to realise more the true purpose of life, and to ask myself whether I am carrying out His will? Am I taking the right view of life? Have I understood fully the purpose of God in my life? Have I dedicated my life to Him?

One point that will help us very materially to realise the purpose of sorrows and trials is to make them the occasions of higher resolutions for the future. It is the purpose of God to make us *perfect through sufferings*. After every suffering we should be careful to mark it by some higher spiritual resolution which will lead us to a higher level. In framing such a resolution you would find Psalm cxvi. a help. In a season of convalescence or of recovery from sorrow you, too, will say: '*I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*'; '*I will pay my vows now in the presence of all His people*'; I will lead a more thankful life, lead a life of higher thankfulness. Or again: '*I will receive the cup of salvation*'; I will be

more regular and earnest in my Communion. You will thus gather from this psalm two or three definite resolutions. We miss the purpose of sorrow if we do not make some definite resolution. So that as you think of this point — the greater knowledge of self — pray in the words of the Psalmist: *'Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'*

III. Remember the need of perseverance in devotion in the midst of care or in a time of sorrow (by no means an easy duty). It is easy when things go smoothly to be enthusiastic; but when the spirit is pressed down by sorrow or care, then it is difficult to persevere in devotion. We have no heart to go to *'the House of the Lord.'* It is not infrequently the case that one who has been constant in the Sanctuary has no heart to remain faithful after some great sorrow. Sometimes we feel conscientiously and earnestly that we are not fit to go. I think, however, as a rule, that when we are depressed by natural feelings we ought not to keep away. Blessed Communion is often made in a troubled spirit. We are often more fitted for the Sacrament when we are bowed down and troubled than when we are moved by warm feelings. If we endeavour to persevere through all troubles I am quite sure that our God will *'make darkness light before'* us, and that *'sorrow'* will *'be turned into joy'*: *'Under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my refuge until this tyranny be overpast'*; *'Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.'* The natural feelings often go, but the effort and struggle of the devotional life makes our lives higher. We must persevere in our efforts. The more

our sorrows are sanctified the more shall we learn to say with the Psalmist: '*It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes.*'

Address VIII.

THE TRIALS OF HOME LIFE.

IN our last Meditation we endeavoured to dwell on the life of sacrifice as presented in the sorrows and troubles of the world. Another aspect is put before us in the trials of home life. The Blessed Virgin's life was full of such trials. In her unique position there was none to sympathise with her, none who could enter into the mystery of her high Vocation. The village was notorious for evil, the brethren of the Lord were cold and unbelieving and without sympathy: '*Neither did His brethren believe in Him.*' There were troubles in her domestic life—the loss of her Child for a season. For three days He was nowhere to be found: '*Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.*' Her life was not free from trials in the home life.

We will take this as our special subject this afternoon, and consider one or two interesting points that may be helpful to us.

I. The Want of Sympathy from those nearest and dearest to us is a great source of trial. Look on this also as an opportunity. Sometimes the younger find themselves alienated from the elder; there is division in religious views; and the alienation is very deeply felt: '*I am*

come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household.' But here it is important to realise that there is a purpose in such a trial as this. Besides an exercise of virtue, it is, again, material for sacrifice. Perhaps you think the little things in the ordinary routine of home life hardly worthy of the name of sacrifice. But there is a great field for self-sacrifice in the home life. You may take these trials and feel they are ways and means which may raise your lives. It is noteworthy how very much can be done. The gentleness created by self-sacrifice draws others by the unselfishness that they witness as we '*overcome evil with good.*'

II. Then there is another form of these trials—Anxiety. It is instanced in the life of the Blessed Virgin—the anxiety of the flight into Egypt, the anxiety at the loss of the Holy Child. Have you not known anxieties and days of terrible suspense? Or the anxiety may take a spiritual form for one lost by sin, one for whom you have prayed and prayed, bound by the chain of Satan. How long it often lasts! It is such a lingering trial. You have prayed and prayed, and have seen no answer, but you may be quite sure that the prayers are heard and *will* receive an answer: '*I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season also I take no rest.*' This is one of the bitterest forms of the trial. A mother's heart broken over a prodigal son, or a sister mourning over a brother who is wasting his life. All these trials are a discipline. Never try to bear them alone, but seek the sympathy of our Lord: ' *Casting all your care upon Him.*' The burden is too much to bear unaided. Cast it on Him; put it into His hands with

perfect confidence. The true remedy for such suffering is not to fret and harass yourselves, or to try to bear the burden alone: *'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.'*

III. One other point—the finding of the Holy Child. The House of God is the shelter in home trials. There we shall find our Lord, the Comforter of all trials. It was there that the Blessed Virgin found her Child, and will it not be so with us? If we seek Him as our Refuge we shall find Him there, *'a very present help in trouble.'*

But we must remember that anxiety naturally tends to keep us away from God. It must have been difficult for the Blessed Virgin to go back to the Temple, but it was there that she found Him. Then there was no disappointment. In the beautiful words of the Psalmist, let us say: *'He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up His head'; 'In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His Tabernacle; Yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.'* So that we may take as our three points: (1) The want of sympathy and its purpose; (2) the anxieties of home life; (3) the shelter of the House of God. *'O cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall nourish thee'; 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.'*

Address IX.

THE BEARING OF THE CROSS.

You will remember that in the two former meditations on the Life of Sacrifice we have glanced at the sorrows of the world and of the home life. Another aspect of sacrifice in its severest form is the Sacrifice of the Cross. Call to mind the Blessed Virgin standing by the Cross on the day of the Crucifixion. It is impossible for us to realise the anguish which at this culminating crisis pierced her soul. She was in very deed a *'partaker of the sufferings of Christ.'* All that had gone before could hardly be compared to this. The anguish of a Mother, a widow, gazing at the death of her only Son!—a sinless and a perfect Son; the agony of death, malice and wickedness apparently triumphant: *'This is your hour and the power of darkness.'* What that hour and the denseness of that darkness must have been to the Blessed Virgin we cannot say: *'Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.'* And I think, as we glance at this sorrow, there is one point that must strike us: the supernatural calmness and courage with which, when all the disciples forsook Him and fled, only the beloved Apostle and the Blessed Virgin *'stood by the Cross.'* We feel that she must have been Divinely and supernaturally sustained. She was able to listen to His parting words of counsel and sympathy, stayed up with the great hope of the Resurrection and of His triumph over death.

We cannot help remembering how deeply she had pondered over the sayings of His later Manhood, those sayings that spoke of His death and *'the glory that should*

follow.' Her heart must have laid hold of some of this hope. What other help she may have had we cannot tell. Underneath her were the Divine Arms sustaining her. We know that the Eternal God was her refuge, and that she had the sympathy of the Son of Man—the same sympathy that is vouchsafed to us when we are able to lean on no other arm, to know no other sympathy: '*Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*' Yes; it is the experience of many of God's saints that in their moments of deepest anguish and darkness there come unthought-of consolations on which they had never reckoned. '*Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee.*' Think of these words, and remember them in some great sorrow and anguish.

This, then, is the outline of our meditation. Let us pass on to one or two special points.

I. First, at the outset, let us touch on the form of mental and spiritual anguish. This is the deepest form of sorrow—the sacrifice within the soul. So it was with our Lord Himself when it culminated in that cry of desolation: '*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*' He had been despised by the world, forsaken by His disciples, and now He seems forsaken by God; that is to say, He feels for a short season the desolation of the hidden Countenance of the Father, though He was always with Him, and He knew that the Father was with Him. We know this form of anguish; it comes to us in various ways. One form is depression of spirits arising partly, but not always, from physical causes. Though it is true that the physical acts on the spiritual, yet the spiritual acts also on the physical, for the two are always blended together. Depression of spirits takes in both: '*My heart within me*

is desolate’; ‘*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*’ This depression is a form of mental anguish. Let us think of it in this light, not as coming merely from a physical cause, but as part of our spiritual sacrifice. Let us bear up bravely. We must not succumb and give way to it. Bear up as one going through a spiritual discipline which for some cause God is laying upon us, hoping—yea, knowing—that in due time ‘*He will make our darkness to be light.*’ Sometimes it goes deeper—the inward desolation of the very spirit—as though God had forsaken us: ‘*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit*’; ‘*Lord, why abhorrest Thou my soul, and hidest Thou Thy Face from me?*’

This is a special trial, known by some of the greatest saints. Such times of forsaking may be a discipline of love to draw us more and more closely to Himself, and to make us feel the preciousness of His Presence, and that there is no consolation or joy like the fulness of joy in His Presence: ‘*In Thy Presence is the fulness of joy.*’ Or it may be to make us realise the joy of His Countenance that for a time He hides His Face from us.

Very often in these seasons of forsaking there comes upon us such a sense of our own sins, our own corruption, our alienation from God, so constantly pressing upon us, that we learn to realise those words of the Psalmist: ‘*My sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up: yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me.*’ Never lose sight of the deep meaning and purpose of such spiritual sorrow. It has a spiritual purpose. That purpose is often to make us realise more and more the awfulness of separation from God. Then, after tasting of that desolation, our souls (if we follow on patiently and

trustfully) are led to long and yearn for the light of God's Countenance, as though the darkness were intended to issue in the Divine and everlasting light which beams from Him. Take up those words of the Psalmist (nowhere are found expressions of deeper spiritual feelings than those we meet with in the Book of Psalms): '*My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?*'

II. Let us pass on to another point, following up our meditation as it leads us on—Suffering with Jesus, the Great Sufferer, the Man of sorrows. In spiritual anguish we come nearest to the Cross. His Presence is with us. Those He calls nearest to Himself, He calls to suffering. They are with Him and He is with them. This is one way in which we draw more and more to a closer union, '*that we may know the fellowship of His sufferings.*' It is by this that our fellowship is cemented. In the times of our deepest anguish, those are the times when He is nearest. Some of the most blissful experiences of His nearness have been vouchsafed to His people in this special anguish, when He has drawn closest to His own, uniting them to Himself in the bond of suffering, and leading them more and more into union with Himself. Just as at the Cross the words of sympathy came to His Mother, so at the Cross He speaks to us as He spoke to her—the very words of comfort that we need. We do not always hear them, but we have only to listen patiently and humbly, and then, perhaps in other ways than we think, they will penetrate into our souls, and we shall have the deepest comfort that we need: In Him '*we shall have peace.*'

III. And then, as we touch on the Presence of Jesus in suffering, there is another thought that ought to

encourage and lift up our hearts, and that is the fruit of suffering. We may believe that as the Blessed Virgin looked on to the fruit of our Lord's suffering, so we too may feel sure that in special suffering our Lord is working out some spiritual purpose, maturing for us some fruit of grace. If we look into our own souls, many graces are lacking. Some of the fruits of grace are not matured, are not even ripening in us. We must have hope that out of this suffering there may come some power over sin, some sanctification of nature, some participation of grace, which marked the perfect Manhood of our Lord, that gradually we may grow in likeness to Himself. Fruits grow imperceptibly. We do not see them ripening, but they are ripening.

In any time of great suffering we should always think of the fruit of suffering, and believe that though suffering is hard and mysterious, and though we cannot know now why God is thus dealing with us, there will come some fruit, some fruit of grace, even great fruit: '*If we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified together.*' He will bring us '*out of darkness and out of the shadow of death, and brake our bonds in sunder.*'

IV. One thought more in reference to this subject. Our Communion should be the special means of union with Him. It is there that we must seek to unite ourselves with His Sacrifice, and with the joy and power of His Resurrection. It may be helpful to us to take one or two thoughts about our Communion. In realising this (to utter a simple truth), we should endeavour to bring home more and more the reality of His Presence: '*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you.*' This was said on the very night of the Institution. Do you grasp this? Do you bring it home to yourselves? You are

coming into the very Presence of our Lord Himself. You probably often feel that you are not so careful or devout in your preparation as you ought to be. If you only realised more and more this Presence, it would help you very much. It would kindle more and more in you the need of preparation, and how blessed would be the consolation of that Presence in trouble and suffering! Bring the great burden of sorrow and lay it at His Feet, and listen to His words: '*Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden.*' Yes, lay down the burden at His Feet, and you will be refreshed in seasons even of deepest darkness by the Light of His Countenance; as you participate with the Divine Nature: '*He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me*'; '*If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever.*'

As far as we are capable of receiving His life, the more we shall know of the fulness of His grace. The limitation is on our side. As we purify ourselves in body, soul, and spirit, seeking personal holiness, the more of His Life shall we receive, until Christ liveth and groweth in us. We shall be transformed through Christ—changed into His Image. That participation may be manifested in us even here: '*The life of Jesus manifested in our mortal bodies.*' We may show forth manifestations of Himself, reproductions of His graces—lowliness, meekness, unselfishness, trustfulness. So that even here on earth we may grow like Him, as we 'dwell in Him, and He in us.' There will be granted to us supernatural elevation, and we shall be lifted above all the cares and sorrows of this earthly life: '*Whom, having not seen, ye love.*' Even here we may be partakers of the supernatural life, raising us above all the changes and chances of the lower life, manifesting the life of Jesus in us.

So are we preparing for the Vision of Himself at the last, when Sacraments shall have passed away. How will it be possible for us to see Him as He is? The condition of the Beatific Vision is likeness. If we are made like Him, that will be the condition—that is the qualification. Let us seek to grow more and more like Him. That likeness will always be limited and stunted in this life, yet let us hope that after the gradual purification of the soul in the Intermediate State we may be made capable of seeing Him ‘*as He is.*’

Let us take these points for our closing Meditation. We shall learn to value more and more the Fellowship with Him. It does not matter if it be through suffering or anguish, if only our fellowship with Him be made sure. *He* is the One Desire of our life. *He* is All in All: ‘*Whom have I in heaven but Thee: and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.*’

THE END.

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